

THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN T'AI-P'ING T'IENT-KUO

by

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## ABSTRACT

The study attempts to assess the position of women in T'ai-p'ing T'ien-kuo ("The Heavenly Kingdom of Peace"), a rebellious political movement that almost succeeded in overthrowing the Ch'ing dynasty in mid-nineteenth century China. It is argued that the rebellion arose in the context a peasant society suffering the varying dislocations of dynastic decline under the impact of the West. It was a rebellion that put forward a radical social program and one, especially in its policies towards women, that can be seen as a significant departure from Chinese tradition. The study attempts to examine Taiping policy with regard to marriage and the family; the establishment of separate quarters for women; the role of women in education; civil examinations for women; women officers; the abolition of (female) slavery; the prohibition of adultery and prostitution; and social customs and personal adornments.

The study is based on Chinese and English sources. As unorthodox literature Taiping official documents were prohibited and destroyed by the Ch'ing government. They were also greatly damaged by war. Some contemporary accounts in English survive. The data are deficient in many respects and yet indicate the strength and weaknesses of the rebellion and its program. Much of the Taiping program was "western" in origin and is reflective of the early Chris-

tian influence, derived from Hong Kong through certain Taiping leaders, on the rebellion. The rebellion had its greatest strength among the disaffected, especially among the Hakka minority of south China. It is argued that Hakka custom was an important contributory element to the Taiping policy for women. The rebellion failed, and its program perished, for a number of reasons, not least of which was the failure of Taiping leadership to rid itself of certain "traditional influences". If the rebellion had succeeded, perhaps the emancipation of Chinese women would not have been delayed until the twentieth century.



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## INTRODUCTION

T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo (The Heavenly Kingdom of Peace) was a rebellion in China in the middle part of the nineteenth century. It showed a part of China's response to the impact of the West and re-evaluation of the traditional Chinese culture. Although the Taipings fiercely attacked the traditional social order and Confucian ethics, they did not overcome certain traditional influences. When we investigate their ideas, institutions and policies, we find the traditional elements as well as the non-traditional factors--they took certain ideas from Confucianism, secret societies, Christianity, Buddhism and a few minor sources, and juxtaposed or mixed these together in such a way that they produced new features in their religion, social structure and economic institutions etc.. Therefore, T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo may be regarded as a conglomeration which is a product of the cross fertilization of cultures.

Many of the religious, political, military and historical aspects of T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo have been investigated and analyzed and many questions may now be considered answered. However, one of the distinct areas of interest has received only limited attention from scholars--the status of women. My purpose in this study is to present a survey of the position of women in T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo.

The position of the Taiping women will be discussed

in terms of marriage, family, women's quarters, education, civil examinations and women officers, the abolition of slavery and the prohibition of adultery and prostitution, social customs and personal adornments.

The Taiping women were allowed to take civil service examinations and to hold civil or military positions. They had equal rights in the distribution of land. Their education was no longer neglected. Monogamy was promoted. Foot-binding, slavery, adultery and prostitution were forbidden. These were drastic changes in the traditional Chinese society.

This study tries to investigate and demonstrate the sources of the Taiping rebels' attitude toward women, the roles of women in the Kingdom, and the opportunities and policies which T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo provided for women. A comparison between the position of the Taiping women with that of the traditional women (mainly in Ch'ing society) will be presented.

This thesis is concerned with both the theoretical and the practical spheres. For some areas of study (e.g. their educational institutions) it is unknown whether or not their theories or policies were put into practice, because of the lack of evidence.

The work is based on Chinese and English sources. As unorthodox literature, the Taiping documents were pro-

hibited and destroyed by the Manchu government and were also greatly damaged by the war. The original literature of the Taipings is therefore extremely limited. The Ch'ing official records, Chinese commoners' writings and foreigners' reports are also used as sources of materials. Because the materials on the position of women in T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo are not abundant and are limited to certain areas (e.g., Chin-ling, Wuhu) and to certain groups (i.e. the Taiping army and those women having connection with officialdom), my study can not cover the whole area of the Kingdom.

#### Conditions in China

China was, for the most part, an agrarian society, and its social order depended to a great extent on the proper distribution of land. After each major upheaval, the population was considerably decreased so that there was sufficient land for the survivors, but after a period of peace the population increase inevitably resulted in a decrease in per capita land cultivation. This caused difficulties in earning a livelihood, which led to banditry and uprisings, usually accompanied by administrative inefficiency, political corruption and moral degeneration. A period of disorder followed, whereby the population was once again greatly reduced until, theoretically, a new balance was achieved between land and people. A period of peace and order then set in, signaling

the beginning of a new cycle. In brief, the alternation of order and disorder was a way of maintaining social equilibrium. The Chinese believed generally that a small upheaval was to be expected every thirty years and a great tumult every hundred years.<sup>1</sup>

Applying this concept to the Ch'ing period, we find that one and a half centuries of peace and prosperity under emperors K'ang-hsi, Yung-cheng and Ch'ien-lung had nurtured a rapid growth in population, but that the land had not increased correspondingly. The population rose from 179 million in 1750 to 430 million in 1850, an increase of more than two hundred per cent in a century; whereas the arable land rose from 549 million mou (1 mou = 1/6 acre) in 1661 to 737 million in 1833, an increase of only 35 per cent in one and a half centuries. The increase of arable land was far behind that of population. The discrepancy between population and land growth resulted in a sharp decrease in per capita cultivation. With 708 million mou in 1753, each individual could theoretically be allotted 3.86 mou, but with 791 million mou in 1812, only 2.19 mou per person could be expected. Between 1812 and 1833 not only was there no increase, but due to natural calamities, there was actually a decrease in arable land, from 791 million mou to 737 million, whereas the population increased from 361 million to 398 million, lowering the per capita cultivation to only 1.86<sup>2</sup> mou.



Continuous shrinkage of individual landholdings might mean increasing hardship for the peasant. When the produce of the small acreage could no longer sustain a peasant's life, he sold the land and became a tenant. Once the land was sold, the peasant was not likely to buy it back, because the rich owner would not sell except at a very good price which the peasant could not meet. This resulted in the ever-increasing concentration of land among the rich. As early as the middle of the 18th century, Ts'ao Yün Tsung Tu (Director of Grain Transport), Ku Tsung requested the limitation of landholdings and suggested that a family should not have more than thirty Ch'ing (453.90 acres). This indicated that there might have been many families which owned more than thirty Ch'ing of land. In the middle of the nineteenth century, from 40 to 80 per cent of the land was concentrated in the hands of 10 to 30 per cent of the people; the majority of 60 to 90 per cent of the people were landless. In addition to this, the big landlords were usually so powerful that they paid little tax, whereas the average peasants, along with the regular amount of tax, had to pay three or four times more which was irregularly levied by the local gentry, the tax collectors and the local governors. The tenants usually had to pay 50 per cent of the yield for rent, and as the rent was not paid in kind but in commuted money, in the process of commutation, usually another 30 per cent

was levied. For instance, a mou of land which produced 3 shih of grain (1 shih = 100 catties = 133 1/3 lbs.; shih, also called picul or tan) should normally cost 1.5 shih for rent, but when commuted to money payment at 30 per cent extra, the rent actually amounted to 1.95 shih, leaving the farmer only 1.05 shih for himself. When the peasants could not earn enough to make a living, they borrowed from usurers.<sup>3</sup>

The merchants, as well as the landlords, were usually usurers. The merchants manipulated prices in order to make larger profits. They lent money to people at exorbitant interest rates. The owners of pawnshops, which were popular in China, always charged heavy interest. Generally speaking, while the landlords and the rich businessmen lived a extravagant and comfortable life, the majority of the peasants had to struggle for a living. Many displaced and unemployed peasants drifted to the cities as porters, dockhands and sailors, etc.. However, there were not many industrial cities to absorb the population. Therefore, many people went abroad to seek a new life while others were compelled by hard living conditions to become roving beggars, opium or salt smugglers or bandits. The unemployed people were a source of unrest in the society and became the ready material for banditry and rebellion. These conditions served as an indirect or remote cause of the Taiping rebellion.

Since the reign of the Tao-kuang Emperor (1821-

1850), the imports of opium increased year by year, and China spent more than ten million dollars of silver on an average each year for opium.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, China's imports greatly exceeded its exports. For example, from 1818 to 1833, the trade between China and two countries--the British Empire and the United States--showed that the total imports of China were valued at \$402,012,385, but the total exports were valued at only \$368,528,740. Both the imports of opium and the trade imbalance became greater and greater causing a continual outflow of silver and increasing inflation. The price of silver rose higher and higher--before the 19th century a tael (about  $1\frac{1}{3}$  ounce) of silver was worth about one thousand dollars in cash; by 1845, it had risen to two thousand. This 100 per cent rise in the exchange rate reduced a man's income by half, for although both silver and cash were common currencies of the state, it was the latter that was the basic medium of exchange in the market--rice was bought and wages were paid with cash. A shih of rice formerly sold for \$3000 cash which could be exchanged for 3 taels at the old rate of \$1000 to 1, but in 1845 it could only be exchanged for 1.5 taels at the inflated rate of \$2000 to 1. In effect, this meant that the farmer's land tax burden was doubled because the amount of tax was fixed in terms of silver. On the other hand, the income of the labourers which was fixed in terms of cash was paid in cash, thus they actually got only one half of the

silver value. The wages of a common laborer were about \$10,000 a year.<sup>5</sup> He could not possibly maintain his family with that sum; accordingly, he had to go to the usurers for loans, which only plunged him hopelessly into debt, or he had to flee from his home town to become a vagrant beggar or a bandit. In rural communities, many peasants, who could not afford taxes, laid waste to the land and ran away to earn a livelihood by other occupations or to become beggars or bandits just like many poor labourers did. In brief, the inflation of silver indirectly made the economic conditions of the common people worse. The disintegration of local society as a consequence of the economic conditions was one of the major features in nineteenth-century China. This critical situation prepared the way for the operations of insurgents. It was a basic cause of the rebellion.

During the years of Tao-kuang (1821-1850), there were frequent natural calamities in China. Among the major ones were a severe drought in Honan in 1847; the flooding of the Yangtze River over the four provinces of Hupeh, Anhwei, Kiangsu and Chekiang; the famine in Kwangsi in 1849 and the shifting of the course of the Yellow River from the southern to the northern channel in Shantung in 1852 which flooded a large area. Millions of people suffered from these natural calamities. The Chinese peasants in the 19th century were poor,--even in times of good harvest they could barely manage to live. Suffering from the lack of provisions,

people were easily swayed to become bandits or rebels.

In order to have a more complete understanding of the overall conditions of that time, after briefly touching on the socio-economic conditions above--the widespread poverty and exploitation, --it is necessary now to study the political situation, the ways in which the Ch'ing officials dealt with such a disintegrating society, and the reactions of the common people to the socio-economic conditions.

In the Ch'ing dynasty, the decision-making on personnel and policy being so heavily concentrated in the throne, once the quality of imperial leadership diminished, the entire system began to sink under the effects of inertia and corruption. By the 1770's, in the Emperor Ch'ien-lung's old age, the essential communication between the monarch and the principal officials of the empire was no longer maintained. When Ho-shen was in the top post at court (1776-99), corruption was rampant in the metropolitan administration, in the armies, and in the provinces. Evidence abounds of Ho-shen exacting large bribes from governor-generals, governors and finance commissioners, and it fell upon the chou and hsien magistrates to produce the funds by imposing irregular levies on the people. As early as 1674, the sale of literary titles and lower government posts--officers of magistracy or magistrates--was first adopted by the government. As time went

on, more ranks and official positions were purchasable. The government officials were characterized by superficiality, temporization, and irresponsibility. Little or no attention was paid to people's welfare. Of the more "conscientious" officials who were relatively free from corruption, some passed their time in literary activities, while others read Buddhist scriptures. They considered themselves lofty and refined, regarding those officials who busied themselves with administration as vulgar. After spending money on the purchase of an official position, a man was likely to try to recover it during his office. Many of the officials took it for granted that they might obtain some extra money from the public funds or directly from the people in order to make up for their insufficient regular salaries.<sup>6</sup> When feuding or banditry arose, the local governors usually kept silent as if there were no such occurrence.

The deterioration of the Ch'ing administration continued. The two emperors who ruled in the first half of the nineteenth century, Chia-ch'ing (1796-1820) and Tao-kuang (1821-50) were well-intentioned enough, but both surrounded themselves with either incompetent timeservers or men who were corrupt. Nothing was done to correct the abuses of the Ch'ing armies, and governor-generals and governors were not encouraged to try to reform the local administrations.<sup>7</sup>

The quiescent and laissez-faire policy of the local officers provided favourable opportunities for the activities of the secret societies, which were organized on the pretext of freeing the Chinese from the Manchu oppression and returning China to the Chinese. Pai-lien chiao (White Lotus Society) in the North and T'ien-ti hui (Heaven and Earth Society), also known as San-ho hui, San-tien hui, and Hung-men, in the South were the most important. They were anti-Manchu and their members were mostly poor workers and peasants. Among the many uprisings of the secret societies, the major ones were as follows. In 1786, Lin Shuang-wen of T'ien-ti hui led a riot against the Manchu troops in Taiwan which lasted for a whole year. The members of the White Lotus Society started a war against the Manchu rulers which lasted ten years (1793-1802) in five provinces--Hupei, Honan, Szechwan, Shensi and Kansu--and forced the Manchu government into an expensive mobilization of the forces of the whole empire in order to wipe out the rebellion. In 1812, the members of T'ien-li chiao, a branch of the White Lotus Society, attempted a coup d'etat in the Peking palace. Besides the activities of T'ien-ti hui and Pai-lien chiao, the Mohammedans in Kansu and Sinkiang rebelled against the rule of the Manchu government several times in the 18th and the 19th centuries. Chao Chin-lung, a man of the Yao (minority in Southwest China) started a riot in Hunan in 1832. These insurrections were reactions to the malad-

ministration of the Ch'ing dynasty and to the depressed socio-economic conditions. They demonstrated how intolerable the conditions of China were at that time. They also demonstrated that the Taiping rebellion was born in a situation already full of riots and uprisings. The activities of secret societies might have stimulated the Taiping rebellion.

As early as the K'ang-hsi period (1662-1722), the Manchu Pa-ch'i (the Eight Banners) Army had degenerated to such a point as to be unable to suppress San-fan (the Revolt of the Three Feudations, 1673-81) and the court had had to rely on Lü-ying (the Chinese Green Barracks). By the time of the White Lotus Rebellion in 1796-1804, the Chinese army had lost its vigor too. The security of villages (or towns) depended for the most part on local self-defense corps. Both the Manchu and Chinese troops had forfeited the people's respect and fear. Moreover, the defeat in the Opium War<sup>9</sup> revealed the military weakness of the dynasty. The government troops were afraid of the British. They regarded retreat on the eve of the battle as 'old custom' and the<sup>10</sup> abandonment of places they should hold as an 'ordinary affair'.

On the other hand, some Chinese people had different reactions to the foreign aggression. In San-yuan-li (a village close to Canton) for example, several thousand people gathered against the British troops. Those Cantonese who had had contact with the foreigners for a long time had a sharp



nationalistic consciousness. They were benefited during the early part of the international trade, but had suffered a sudden depression during and after the Opium War when Canton was no longer the sole trading port. Thus, racial and economic factors made them fight against the British troops. However, in order to avoid trouble, the British did not offer much resistance leading the people to believe that the British were afraid of them. Thus it gave rise to a proverb, "The people are afraid of officials, the officials are afraid of the foreign devils and the foreign devils are afraid of the people." When the people thought that they could frighten those whom even the Chinese officials were afraid of, they felt themselves to be very powerful.<sup>11</sup> This kind of psychological factor could have caused people to be brave enough to rebel.

#### Local Conditions

As compared with other provinces, Kwangtung province had more contacts with the West before the Opium War. The Cantonese could have gained the Western ideas through their contacts with the foreign businessmen and missionaries. This was one of the conditions under which the Taiping Rebellion arose.

The local governors in Kwangsi province, adjacent to Kwangtung, were especially corrupt. They let banditry

and rioting follow their natural courses and cared nothing for the welfare of the people. Also because the local self-defense forces were comparatively weak, Kwangsi had been a harbor for bandits and starvelings for many years. The native people and the Hakka, or guest settlers who moved in from other parts of China, frequently fought against each other.<sup>12</sup>

After the Opium War, the loss of the trade monopoly and the competition of the new treaty ports caused unemployment in Canton and along the interior trade routes connected with it. Pirates, who had been eliminated from the South China Coast by the British, went to Kwangsi. This added a further factor of insecurity to the region.

The original site of the Taiping rebellion was Chin-t'ien village, Kuei-p'ing district which was one of the districts of the Hsin-chou Prefecture in southeast Kwangsi province. Hsin-chou Prefecture was directly accessible by Hsi-kiang (the West river) from Kwang-chou (or Canton) and Hong-kong. Thus, it was exposed early to the influences of foreign business and missionaries. More than one hundred years earlier, great quantities of foreign goods had flooded these districts.

The pawnshops, run by both Cantonese or local people, were numerous in Kuei-p'ing and always charged heavy interest. The average interest on borrowed money was thirty

per cent and even in some instances, forty or fifty per cent. Borrowed grain and overdue rent were returned at the rate of one and a half shih for one shih. However, interest varied according to the prosperity or depression of the season and the length of time of the loan.

There were other forms of lending known as fang-hua and mai-ch'ing liu-t'u. Fang-hua meant that, in order to obtain a loan, the peasants in need of money had to lower the price of their grain with the purpose of selling it before it was mature. In mai-ch'ing liu-t'u, the peasants nominally sold the trees on their own land in borrowing money from the lenders, who, after waiting a few years for the trees to mature, then felled them. In other words, the lenders not only took possession of the trees, but also used the peasant's land to grow them, thus obtaining even greater profits.

At that time, the annexation of land by landowners (or the rich people) was a big problem. In Kuei-hsien, Kuei-p'ing, and P'ing-nan districts, land was concentrated in the hands of a few. In Kuei-hsien, for example, three families owned sixty per cent of all land in the district.<sup>13</sup> Since the land became more concentrated in the hands of a few and the number of peasants who lost their land increased daily, the peasants' demand for land became more and more urgent. The landlords and the rich merchants who were in control of large areas of land, took advantage of this to carry out cruel

rent exploitation of the peasants who depended on the land for a living.

The rate of the rent at that time was, in most cases, 100 seeds, 1000 rent--for land that required 100 chin (a measure of weight, a catty fixed at 1.33 lb.) of seeds, 1000 chin of grain was the rent. In some cases, for land requiring 100 chin of seeds, 1500 or 1600 chin rent was collected. The highest rent was 2000 chin for 100 chin of seeds. It was very difficult for the peasants to cultivate the fields of landlords. Besides paying rent, they sometimes had to work for the landlord without getting wages from him. When the landlord (or his attorney) came to collect the rent, they had to entertain him. On New Year's Day or at some other festivals, they also had to send presents to the landlord. The peasants usually owed the landlord some money, and once the debt was owed, it became difficult to repay it back until, finally, they had to sell their children and consequently broke up their families and eventually perished. When they could not afford to pay taxes or rent, they had<sup>14</sup> no alternative but to run away.

Peasants who had suffered from exploitation from their landlords for a long time had sunk into poverty and famine. Moreover, there was exorbitant exploitation by traders and usurers. Also, because of the huge indemnity after the Opium War which caused the Ch'ing dynasty's heavy

tributes and miscellaneous taxes, the peasants either lost their land or were on the brink of death. The distresses in their lives need not be mentioned. Therefore, when the T'ai-p'ing rebellion first started, there was a slogan, "Land in Lien-t'ang and Ch'iao-t'ang can be tilled by all. Death to the people of Shih-t'ou-chiao." This meant that all the landlords in Shih-t'ou-chiao village should be put to death, and the land which provided more than one million chin rent in Lien-t'ang village and Ch'iao-t'ang village belonging to absentee Shih-t'ou-chiao landlords, was to be redistributed to all. This reflected the urgency of the peasants' demand for land at that time and the degree of their hatred towards the landlords.

In addition to the exploitation mentioned above, there were natural calamities. According to the records of Hsin-chou fu-chih, there was a great drought in 1830 (the tenth year of the reign of Tao-kuang Emperor), a locust plague in 1833, in 1834, locusts and floods, and in the villages of Ta-hsuan, rivers from the three mountain areas of Peng-hua, Tzu-ching, and Wu-chih overran their banks causing three feet of flood water on the plain. In 1840 and again in 1848 in Hsin-chou there was a great drought. The price of rice was very high. The famine was disastrous. Thus we can easily see that the peasants who had already suffered exploitation on the one hand and years of calamity

on the other, lived an extremely difficult life.

The rulers of the Ch'ing became so accustomed to the suffering of the peasants that they ignored it. At the same time, the local officials promoted the construction, and reparation of temples. According to Hsin-chou fu-chih, in 1835 they built the Fu-po Temple in P'ing-nan. In 1836, they built in Hsin-chou the ancestor temple of Pa-kung and the temple of General Liu-meng. In 1842, they built Wen-chang temple in P'ing-nan and rebuilt Ch'eng-huang temple (the temple of the City God). In 1843, they built the San-yuan temple in P'ing-nan and in 1847 renovated the temple of the God of the Underworld in Kuei-hsien. The years of construction and renovation cost over 20,000 taels in gold. The expense or labour inevitably fell on the shoulders of the peasants. This intensified the exploitation of the peasants. Under such circumstances, peasants were forced to rebel for their survival.

During the years of Tao-kuang (1821-1850), there were riots and revolts in Kwangsi; for instance, the uprising of Chang Chia-hsiang in Kuei-hsien, Chang Chia-fu in Ch'ing-yüan, Cheng A-kuei in Liu-chou, Liang A-chiu in Wu-hsuan, Ch'ü Chen-tsu in Hs'iang-chou, etc.. Most of these people were members of T'ien-ti hui or had some association with it. They rebelled against the Ch'ing rulers and landlords.

At that time, the struggle between the Hakka

(most of them emigrated from a Hakka district--Chia-ying-chou in Kwangtung province), and the Punti (the natives of Kwangsi province) in Hsin-chou fu, the original prefecture of the Taiping Rebellion, was very intense. The hostility involved not only families, but also villages or several districts. Because the local officials seldom mediated feuds and usually let them follow their natural courses, they were rampant among the Hakka and the Punti. Both the Hakka and the Punti engaged in cultivation for a living, and because the population was increasing while the arable land was extremely limited, the conflict over land seemed to be an inevitable outcome. Religious differences were also a cause of the struggle. Many Hakka took up Christianity while the natives persisted in their worship of idols and spirits. The Hakka attacked the natives for their superstition and the natives despised Hakka for accepting a heterodox foreign faith. One example of the resulting conflicts was reported in Kuei-hsien. It happened that a rich person among the Hakka forced an attractive native woman to marry him. A feud ensued, resulting in the utter defeat of the Hakka. Since all their land was seized by the victorious natives and they had no place to live, the three thousand<sup>15</sup> vanquished eventually joined the Taiping rebels in 1850.

The events and conditions cited above illustrate that the social, economic and political structures of China

were disintegrating and explain why the rebellion started  
<sup>16</sup>  
 in Hsin-chou fu, Kwangsi province.

### A Short History of the Rebellion

Hung Hsiu-ch'üan, the founder of the T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo, was born in Hua-hsien, Kwangtung province, in 1814. Originally, a village schoolteacher, he had taken the civil service examinations for the Hsiu-tsai degree several times, but had failed. On one occasion, in Canton, he was given a series of booklets under the general title of Ch'üan-shih liang-yen written by a Christian, Liang Fa. The doctrines of Hung's Shang-ti-hui (God Society or Pai Shang-ti-hui, God Worshipper's Society) were based on these booklets.

Combining what he had learned from these books with the visions of a serious illness which he had had in 1837, he established Shang-ti-hui in 1843 and started to preach his  
<sup>17</sup>  
 belief. He claimed that God (Jehovah or Jah) was the Heavenly Father, Jesus was the first son of God, and he himself was Jesus' younger brother, that the Chinese were the chosen people and he, the truly appointed son of Heaven, descended from Heaven in order to save the Chinese. The people who joined Shang-ti-hui were to be treated equally. The male members were brothers; the female, sisters. All members should worship only one God, not any ancestors or idols, and believe in Jesus Christ, who could redeem one's sins and help one to



be good, in the hope that after death the soul could enter paradise and enjoy permanent happiness. The religious ceremonies and practices included destroying idols, bowing and kowtowing to the sky, burning incense, lighting candles, and offering wine and sacrificial dishes.

In 1844, Hung lost his job as a teacher because he destroyed Confucian tablets. Then he and his close associate, Feng Yñn-shan, went to Kwangsi to preach and find a suitable place to start a rebellion. However, in 1845, Hung went back to his home town and received a teaching job again. During his years in Kwangtung, he wrote books which formed the essential part of his religious and revolutionary theory. Later, he went to Canton for two months to study the Bible under the Reverend I. J. Roberts, a Southern Baptist missionary. At the same time, Feng Yñn-shan remained in Kwangsi to preach their religion and recruit members. It was Feng who selected Tzu-ching-shan, north of Kuei-p'ing, as the headquarters of the rebellion. Thus, while Hung was the theoretical leader, Feng Yñn-shan was the real manager and actual planner of the rebellion. In July 1847, Hung joined Feng at Tzu-ching-shan where the Shang-ti-hui was systematically organized and where there were more than three thousand members.

Along with Hung and Feng, Yang Hsiu-ch'ing, Hsiao Ch'ao-kuei, Wei Ch'ang-hui and Shih Ta-kai were other capable

members to act as leaders of their movement in 1850. Hung, Feng, Yang, Shih were Hakkas, and possibly Hsiao Ch'ao-kuei and Wei Ch'ang-hui were also Hakkas. As for their original followers, several thousand of them were Hakka farmers, a few hundred were charcoal workers, about one thousand were miners. However, there were a few rich farmers, well-educated people and merchants, and also many members of secret societies, Hakka bandits and a few thousand of the Hakka troops who had been serving for the Manchu cause and revolted to join the Taipings. Thus, it is clear that the Hakka played major parts in both the leadership and the following of the Taiping rebellion.

In June 1850, the rebels were concentrated and organized at Chin-t'ien. They started to march towards Wushuan and Hsiang-chou in April, 1851 and arrived at Yung-an in September of the same year. In Yung-an, Hung named his organization T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo (the Heavenly Kingdom of Peace). He was called T'ien Wang (the Heavenly King). Titles were conferred on the other leaders as follows: Tung Wang (the Eastern King)--Yang Hsiu-ch'ing, a charcoal worker in Kuei-p'ing. In March 1848, Yang claimed himself to be a communicator of the will of God, and Hung acknowledged it to be true. He was full of plans and good at strategy and made the commander-in-chief in 1850. Hsi Wang (the Western King)--Hsiao Ch'ao-kuei, brother-in-law of Hung, was a farmer.

He claimed himself to be a communicator of the will of Jesus Christ, and Hung also recognized it. Nan Wang (the Southern King)--Feng Yün-shan, originally a village school teacher, was one of Hung's first two converts (the other was Hung Jen-kan, Hung's cousin). Pei Wang (the Northern King)--Wei Ch'ang-hui was a small landlord and pawnshop owner of Chin-t'ien village. During the great famine of 1849, he had given away much grain and money and so had a large member of supporters. He led the members of his whole clan to join the rebellion. I wang (the Wing King)--Shih Ta-kai, a rich farmer of Kuei-hsien, was reported to be the best educated man among the Taipings and to excell in both military and literary affairs. Under the Heavenly King, Yang Hsiu-ch'ing (the Eastern King) was placed in control of the whole administration. During the days at Yung-an, the crude forms of their political and social systems were instituted.

At Yung-an, the Taipings were besieged by the government troops from the winter of 1851 to April 1852. After escaping from the siege, they marched to Kuei-lin, the capital of Kwangsi, and later to Ch'üan-chou. Feng Yün-shan (Nan Wang) was killed near Ch'üan-chou in 1852. Later on, Hsiao Ch'ao-kuei (Hsi Wang) was also killed on the battlefield of Ch'ang-sha. After passing through Hunan, Hupei, finally, the Taipings took Chin-ling (Nanking) on

March 19, 1853. It took only twenty-seven months to cover the large area from Kwangsi to Nanking.

After the Taipings conquered Chin-ling, they established their capital there and named it T'ien-ching. The number of their followers had grown to over three million. About one-third of their followers were troops. In the same year (1853), Hung sent an expedition to North China with the purpose of capturing Peking. This northern expedition reached the vicinity of T'ientsin, however, it was completely defeated in 1855, because it was comparatively weak (only about 50,000 troops), communication lines were not well maintained, cavalry was non-existent, and they were not used to the extremely cold weather.

Another expedition was sent westward to retake Kiangsi, Anhwei, Hupei, and Hunan which the Taipings had rapidly passed through. Accusing the Taipings of destroying Chinese traditional culture, Tseng Kuo-fan, a high ranking official of the Manchu government, organized the local troops of Hunan to fight against Hung's Christian army. Tseng Kuo-fan's troops were badly harassed by the Taipings. At the same time, the Manchu force under the command of Hsiang Jung, which had pursued the Taipings from Kwangsi to Chin-ling and had encamped near Chin-ling for many years, was crushed.

From the beginning of the rebellion until 1856, the Taipings were quite successful except for the failure of

the northern expedition. The main reasons for their success were as follows. First, their ideology was effective--it was not only a pure religious movement, but also a racial and political uprising intended to overthrow the cruel landlords, the corrupt officials and the Manchu government, and to return China to the Chinese. Second, they had a good organization distinguished by its unified command and elasticity. The troops were spirited and cooperated closely. Third, they were strictly disciplined. Fourth, their strategy was good; for example, they made an assault on a weak spot instead of on a place with a strong defense, also they confused their enemies by attacking one point to divert their attention, while actually advancing on another city. Fifth, the corrupt Manchu political and military institutions, the prevalence of famine and bandits, the activities of secret societies, the desire to retake China for the Chinese, etc., as mentioned before, created an opportune background for the rebellion. The people were ready for rebellion as illustrated by the fact that on their way from Chin-t'ien to Chin-ling, many poor people joined them voluntarily. The number of marchers snowballed.

Internal strife broke out in Chin-ling in 1856, when, after continuous victories, Yang Hsiu-ch'ing (Tung Wang), the commander-in-chief, became very ambitious and more arrogant. T'ien Wang was obliged to enhance Yang's position and gave him

the prerogative of being addressed as Wan-sui (Life for Ten Thousand Years or Long Live the Emperor)--the same address as T'ien Wang's. Hung Hsiu-ch'üan (T'ien Wang) could not bear Yang's aggressiveness and usurpation any longer, so, he secretly persuaded Wei Ch'ang-hui (Pei Wang) to kill Yang.

Wei Ch'ang-hui, whose position was next only to Yang's, was very jealous and hated him. Wei not only killed Yang, but also was responsible for the murder of some twenty to thirty thousand of his adherents, soldiers and family members. When Shih Ta-kai (I Wang) returned to Nanking, and, blamed Wei for his cruelty, Wei was very angry and planned to kill Shih too. Shih escaped and returned to his military camp in An-ch'ing, but his family members left in Chin-ling were killed by Wei. Later on, through the request of Shih, Hung (T'ien Wang) ordered his soldiers to kill Wei and two hundred of his close followers. Afterwards, Shih came back to Chin-ling again, but T'ien Wang would not entrust him with much administrative power. Shih was completely disappointed and so he left Chin-ling and started on an independent expedition through Kiangsu, Anhwei, Kiangsi, Fukien, Hunan etc.. Finally, he was defeated in Szechwan in 1863.

The internal strife of 1856 cost the Taipings the death of two capable leaders and the desertion of another. Moreover, T'ien Wang now trusted no one but his relatives. After 1856, the Taipings took the defensive rather than the

offensive. They were able to survive six more years only because the successive famines supplied them with inexhaustible soldiers and two new capable leaders Li Hsiu-ch'eng (Chung Wang) and Ch'en Yü-ch'eng (Ying Wang) came into prominence. Li fought against the Ch'ing troops in the area east of Chin-ling, and Ch'en, west of it.

In 1860, the Taipings were expelled from the provinces of Hupei and Kiangsi by Tseng Kuo-fan's Hsiang-chün (Hunan local troops, also called Hunan Braves). Li Hsiu-ch'eng unsuccessfully attacked Shanghai twice in 1860 and 1861. The defense of Chin-ling by Ch'en Yü-ch'eng was broken in August 1861 and Ch'en died in 1862. Thus Li Hsiu-ch'eng was left alone to fight against the enemies. He had to resist the general attack of Tseng Kuo-fan's troops, the Huai-chün (Anhwei local troops) under the command of Li Hung-chang and Ch'ang-sheng-chün (the Ever Victorious Army) under Generals Ward, Gordon and others. After a siege of more than two years, Chin-ling was taken on July 19, 1864. T'ien Wang committed suicide and Li Hsiu-ch'eng was executed. The Taiping Rebellion had been put down.

After the suppression of the Taiping Rebellion, Tseng and his colleagues were faced with the task of rehabilitation, and in the areas recovered from the rebels, they strove to realize the Confucian ideal of good government through properly trained men. There emerged in the 1860's many truly

conscientious governor-generals and governors who, within the limits of inherited institutions, as well as their own restricted social vision, did work for a benevolent and just government. This resurgence of Confucianism made the T'ung-chih reign (1862-1847) a period of restoration. The suppression of the Taiping Rebellion led to the T'ung-chih Restoration and was probably responsible for the survival of the Ch'ing dynasty until 1911.<sup>20</sup>

#### Reasons for the Failure of the Rebellion

There are several reasons for the failure of the Taipings. The corruption of their organization seems to be the most dominant one. After they arrived in Chin-ling, the leaders were extravagant and licentious in their way of living. They emulated the life style of the Chinese emperors. T'ien Wang himself gave little attention to the state affairs. Because the leaders acted in such a way, the high-ranking officials followed their leaders as models, and the morale and discipline of the army also degenerated.

There were factions in the Taipings. The old members who came from Kwangsi and Kwangtung oppressed the newer members from the other provinces. All members were not actually treated equally, for example, the old members usually held higher positions than the new ones. This caused the new members to transfer their loyalty to the Ch'ing troops.



On the other hand, the government troops made great progress. The Hunan Braves and Huai Army were better paid, disciplined and equipped. Therefore, they became stronger than the Taipings. Tseng Kuo-fan, the commander-in-chief, planned everything carefully in advance and so gained the loyalty of all his officers that they recognized only him as their superior and paid little attention to the Manchu emperor. This marks a turning point in Chinese military history. Before the Taipings, troops were controlled by the court (Central government); after the Taipings, troops belonged to individuals.

After the internal strife of 1856, the Taipings were short of good leaders. Moreover, Hung, as well as other leaders, was stubborn and narrow minded and not inclined to take advice from others.

The Taipings lacked the support of the gentry--the most important element of local control--because the Taiping ideology, which intended to abolish Chinese tradition and bring Christianity to China, was distasteful to them. Because the Chinese people were under the dominance of tradition, the Taiping ideology was too advanced for most of them to accept. Even the Taiping leaders could not observe it consistently and carry it through effectively. To add to this, it was described by Tseng Kuo-fan and others as horrible and illiterate, and opposed to Confucianism and Chinese culture,

so that the intelligentsia and the gentry hated the Taipings and suppressed them.

Poor planning was also a factor in the Taipings' failure. The Taipings should have concentrated their power on taking Peking. If the capital of the Manchu had been taken, the situation would have been changed. The attack on Shanghai caused the interference of foreign force.

#### Political and Social Structure of the Kingdom

The Taiping government was theocratic; T'ien Wang (the Heavenly King) was both the spiritual and secular ruler. Under T'ien Wang, there were other kings who were both civil and military leaders and who acted in council with T'ien Wang. Below the position of the king were those of hou (marquis), then, ch'eng-hsiang (minister), chien-tien (censor), chih-hui (director), shih-wei (aide-de-camp), chiang-chün (general), tsung-chih (superintendent), chien-chün (inspector), chün shuai (army commander), shih-shuai (brigade-commandant), lu-shuai (battalion-commandant), ts'u-chang (company-chief), liang ssu-ma (platoon-chief), wu-chang (section chief), and wu-ts'u (soldier). Thus, the ranks from T'ien Wang to soldier formed a class system. Their civil and military organizations were identical. Soldiers were supposed to cultivate land like farmers when they were not fighting.

Every twenty-five families formed a unit, and among

these twenty-five families there was a public storehouse and a chapel. All social and military affairs were first conducted by the officer, the head of the twenty-five families, called liang ssu-ma (platoon-chief). For example, if there was a dispute among the families, both contending parties went to the liang ssu-ma. After hearing the rights and wrongs of the case, the liang ssu-ma would send the case to his immediate superior called ts'u-chang (company-chief) if he could not settle it. If the quarrel could not be settled by t'su-chang either, then the case was brought step by step to higher officers and, finally, to the Heavenly King. Thus, we may say that the Taiping military, political and social organizations were identical.

The promotion, demotion and recruitment of the members of their organizations were based on recommendation, censure (usually by one's immediate superior) and civil service examinations which were held once a year.

According to T'ien-ch'ao t'ien-mou chih-tu, (the Land System of the Heavenly Dynasty, 1853), the land was equally distributed among the people, but not to be regarded as their own personal estate. People were allowed to take only the amount from the harvest necessary for their subsistence. The rest was withheld from private ownership and was to be kept in the public treasury (storehouse). No one was permitted to have any private property.

Because of the lack of evidence, the Taiping land system is believed by many scholars (e.g. Lo Erh-kang, Jen Yu-wen, Hsiao I-shan etc.) to have never been put into any large scale practice. However, other evidence shows that the public treasuries and common ownership were put into practice, during the first years of the movement, in the army, and in Chin-ling as late as 1861.<sup>21</sup>

The Taiping social ideals were based on the brotherhood of men. Theologically, God was the universal Father and all men were his children. Social equality was thus theoretically implied. Perhaps due to this, the Taiping society provided similar opportunities for both sexes. In the Taiping society, women were allowed to take civil service examinations and to hold civil and military positions which were similar to men's. The Taipings were permitted to worship only one God, and they had to destroy all idols of Buddhism, Taoism and all ancestral and Confucian tablets. Foot-binding, prostitution, opium-smoking and gambling were prohibited. They promoted popular literature and forbade the use of classical literary allusions.

#### The Nature of the Rebellion

The Taiping Rebellion has a number of different aspects, it can be regarded as an agrarian, religious, racial, political and social movement. It was an agrarian movement,

because one of its main purposes was to fight for the possession of land or to have the land redistributed; the majority of their members were peasants. It was a racial movement, because they attempted to overthrow the Manchu. It was a religious movement, because it started with a religious society (Shang-ti hui), religion was one of their inspiring elements throughout the rebellion and it promoted Christianity in China. It was a political movement, because it tried to overthrow the government, to change the economic system, so that all peasants would have land to till, and to give men and women equal rights. It was a social movement, because they tried to obliterate some evil social customs--foot-binding, opium-smoking etc..

#### Consequences of the Rebellion

The credit for suppressing the Taipings was mainly given to Chinese leaders (e.g. Tseng Kuo-fan, Li Hung-chang) and newly organized troops (e.g. Hunan Braves and Huai Army). After the collapse of the Taiping Rebellion, the demoralized and ineffective government troops (i.e. the Manchu banners, and green-banners) were substituted for by the newly organized Chinese troops as the main military power. The Manchu had to depend on the Chinese to safeguard the country; therefore, the Chinese were promoted to important positions both in the government and in the army. The political and military power

shifted to the Chinese.

The reduction of taxes in the provinces of the Yangtze Valley was another consequence of the rebellion. Because the inhabitants were badly affected by the war and became very poor, the government was obliged to reduce the taxation.

The population of China was greatly decreased after the suppression of the rebellion. It was possible that twenty million lives were lost during the Taiping period. Because of the decrease of the population, more land was available for people to work and they could endure their labor and might live better for a while.<sup>22</sup>

After the collapse of T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo, the Taiping ideas, as well as the regime itself, were suppressed by the Ch'ing government. The Chinese traditional culture reaffirmed its power. Therefore, it is difficult to determine how much influence the Taiping ideology had on China. There is no direct connection between the Taiping Rebellion and the events of the twentieth century in China. The failure of the Taiping Rebellion marked a victory of Chinese tradition.<sup>23</sup>

### Previous Rebellions

The Taiping Rebellion, like many of the previous rebellions, such as those of the Huang-chin (the Yellow

Turbans led by Chang Chüeh) of the Han Dynasty, the Huang Ch'ao of the T'ang Dynasty, Roaming Bandits (Li Tzu-ch'eng, Chang Hsien-chung were the most important leaders) of the Ming Dynasty, arose in an environment which was marked by natural disasters (such as flood, drought, and famine) as well as by the corruption of the government, over-taxation of the farmers, land concentration, and bandits. Unlike previous rebellions however, the Taipings arose out of an environment also under the impact of the West.

Nearly all previous rebellions had some sort of religious belief, because their leaders planned to appeal to the people who had been influenced by Taoist or Buddhist sects such as T'ai-p'ing tao of Chang Chüeh in the Han Dynasty. So did the Taiping Rebellion. But the Taipings accepted Christianity and neither Taoism nor Buddhism. The previous rebels as mentioned above, had attacked a ruling dynasty, but not the Confucian teachings. That the Taipings sought, not only to destroy the dynasty, but also to replace the Confucian ethics with their own religious teachings, distinguished it from the previous rebellions. Women did not fill an important role in the previous rebellions; on the other hand, women played a very significant role in ensuring the success of the Taiping rebellion.

Like most of the previous rebels, the Taipings had concentrated their attention on problems of land and taxes.

With the presence of foreign aggression or occupation, the<sup>24</sup>  
ethnic issue was invariably raised.

However, the comparison between the Taiping and other rebellions is not the topic of my thesis. This short introduction can not give much elaborate interpretation, which would take much more space.



## FOOTNOTES

1. Yang Lien-sheng "Toward a Study of Dynastic Configurations in Chinese History" in Studies in Chinese Institutional History, pp. 1-17; Teng Ssu-yü, New Light on the History of the Taiping Rebellion, 1950, pp. 37-38.
2. Ho Ping-ti, Studies on the Population of China, 1368-1953, 1959, pp. 101-135, pp. 281-282; George Taylor "The Taiping Rebellion: Its Economic Background and Social Theory" The Chinese Social and Political Science Review, 32: 545-614 (1932-33). Hsu, Immanuel C. Y. The Rise of Modern China, 1970, p. 271.
3. Teng Ssu-yü, 1950, p. 42; Ho Ping-ti, 1959, pp. 281-82; Lo Erh-kang, T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo shih kang, 1937, pp. 9-10; P'eng Tse-i, Tai-p'ing t'ien-kuo ko-ming ssu-ch'ao, 1946, pp. 12-15; Hsu, Immanuel C. Y., 1970, p. 272.
4. Lo Erh-kang, 1937, p. 12.
5. Ibid. p. 16; Hsu, Immanuel C. Y., 1970, pp. 271-73.
6. Lo Erh-kang, 1937, p. 32.
7. Hsiao I-shan, Ch'ing-tai t'ung-shih 2: pp. 280-83, pp. 885-88.
8. Liu Kwang-ching "Nineteenth-century China: The Disintegration of Old Order and the Impact of the West" in Ho Ping-ti and Tsou Tang. (editors) China in Crisis, 1968, Vol. 1, pp. 93-99. Teng Ssu-yü, 1950, pp. 40-41.
9. Hsu, Immanuel C. Y. 1970, p. 274.
10. Teng Ssu-yü, 1950, p. 47.
11. cf. Wakeman, Frederic, Strangers at the Gates, 1966.
12. The Hakkas were descendants of Chinese immigrants who came from northern China during the periods of great upheaval following the Chin (221-206 B.C.), the T'ang (618-907 A.D.) and the Sung (960-1279 A.D.) dynasties.  
They are a distinct group of people found in the provinces of Kwangtung, Kwangsi, Fukien, Kiangsi, Hunan, Szechuan, Formosa and Overseas. Their various dialects are closely related and their characteristics and customs are very similar.

The struggle between the natives and the Hakkas will be discussed later.

13. T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo ch'i-i ti'ao-ch'a pao-kao (Reports of Field Investigations on the Uprisings of the Taiping Kingdom). Kwangsi Organization for the Investigation of Taiping Culture and History. Peking, San-lien Shu-tien Press., 1956, p. 12.
14. Ibid. pp. 13-14.
15. cf. Jen Yü-wen, Tai-p'ing chün Kwangsi shou-i shih, 1946, pp. 175-179 and pp. 192-195; Lo Erh-kang, 1937, p. 44; Hsiao Kung-chuan, 1960, pp. 412-433; and Cohen, Myron L., "The Hakka or Guest People" in Ethnohistory, Vol. 15, pp. 237-292. Although these sources mention the struggle between Hakka and the natives, the information about the struggle in the original prefecture of the Taiping Rebellion is extremely limited.
16. Owing to the limit of space, this short report about the conditions of China and the local circumstances at that time does not give much elaborate explanations. For further information and interpretation, see Teng Ssu-yü, 1950, pp. 35-49; Lo Erh-kang, 1937, pp. 1-38; Hsiao Kung-chuan, Rural China, 1960; Michael, Franz, The Taiping Rebellion, 1966; Hsiao I-shan, Ch'ing-tai t'ung-shih, 1963; Chang Ching, Chung-hua t'ung-shih, Vol. 5, 1934; and T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo ch'i-i ti'ao-ch'a pao-kao, 1956, Chapter II.
17. Yap P. M. "The Mental Illness of Hung Hsiu-ch'üan, Leader of the Taiping Rebellion" in the Far Eastern Quarterly, Vol. 13, 1953-54. pp. 287-304.
18. Jen Yü-wen, 1946, pp. 105-128; Teng Ssu-yü, 1950, p. 56.
19. Shih, Vincent Y. C., The Taiping Ideology, 1967, pp. 305-306; and Ling Shan-ch'ing, T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo yeh-shih, 1923, Chuan 1 and Chuan 12.
20. cf. Wright, Mary Clabaugh. 1957, pp. 96-124.
21. Shih, 1967, pp. 487-491.
22. Lo Erh-kang, 1937, pp. 128-131; Ho Ping-ti, 1959, pp. 236-248 and p. 282.
23. For further information about the history, social structures, and consequences of the rebellion, see Jen Yü-wen, T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo ch'uan-shih, 1962; T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo

t'ien-chih t'ung-k'ao, 1958; and Lo Erh-kang, T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo shih-kang, 1937; Teng Ssu-yü, New Light on the History of the Taiping Rebellion, 1950; Michael, Franz, The Taiping Rebellion, 1966, Vol. I.

24. cf. Shih Y. C., 1967, Chapter XI.

## CHAPTER I

### MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

#### The Traditional Marriage

The main purpose of the traditional marriage was the perpetuation of the ancestor's lineage for the family. The begetting of sons was the most important task not only because sons could perpetuate the ancestor's lineage but also because sons were the only persons who had to bear all the responsibilities of the living and the security of the parents. The acquiring of a daughter-in-law was for the service and comfort of the parents. Therefore, marriage was not so much an affair of the matured children, as that of the parents and of the family.

The traditional marriage should be arranged by the parents. The marital preferences of the matured children were not considered. The romantic love was denied. The cost and style of the traditional marriage varied according to the local customs. However, the traditional idea was that the more a family could spend on their son's (or daughter's) marriage, the greater the honour they could earn; thus people were forced to involve themselves in a competition of wealth. The poor families that could not even meet the minimum requirement of the local customs would purchase a very young girl from a very poor family and would raise the girl along with their son. When they both reached marriageable age they were

married with a simple ceremony.

In the traditional practice of marrying, a son was commonly expected to get married between the ages of sixteen and eighteen and for a daughter, marriage at nineteen was considered rather late. It was glorious to have grandchildren at an early age. Naturally, the earlier one's son (or daughter) gets married, the more chances one can have grandchildren at an early age.

Betrothals were often made when the children were very small and could not easily be broken. As to the procedure of a marriage, a go-between or match-maker was always employed. The businesses of a match-maker were to make both the boy's and the girl's families acquainted with the circumstances of both families and the personal qualifications of the proposed bride and bridegroom. From the time that the match-maker was employed until the bond was tied, there were Lu-li (six ceremonies) to be performed: 1) The parents of the proposed bridegroom sent the go-between to the parents of the girl to inquire her name and the moment of her birth that the horoscopes of the two may be examined in order to ascertain whether the proposed alliance will be a happy one. 2) If the eight characters of the horoscopes (the boy's and the girl's birth dates including hour, day, month and year) seemed to be all right, the boy's parents sent the match-maker back to the girl's parents to make an offer of

marriage. 3) If that he accepted, the girl's father was requested to return an assent in writing. 4) Presents were then sent to the girl's parents according to the means of the parties. 5) The go-between requested them to choose a lucky day for the wedding. 6) The preliminaries were concluded by the bridegroom going or sending a party to bring his bride to his home.<sup>1</sup>

Traditionally, there were no institutional grounds upon which a woman could obtain a divorce. On the other hand, there were Ch'i-ch'u (seven conditions) upon which a wife might be repudiated: 1) no posterity 2) licentiousness 3) disobedience to parents-in-law 4) quarreling 5) theft 6) jealousy 7) diseases regarded as vicious. On the woman's side, there were only three conditions under which she might protest against repudiation: 1) Her close relatives through whom the marriage was arranged were all deceased and therefore she had no place to go to. 2) She participated for three years in the mourning for her husband's parent. 3) The family's present prosperity and fame were attained through years of struggle in which she shared the hardships.<sup>2</sup>

Traditionally, a man was allowed to take more than one wife. The rich people always practiced polygyny while the poor majority usually practiced monogamy. Polygyny had become the symbol of wealth and status.<sup>3</sup>

## The Taiping Marriage

At the beginning of the Taiping rebellion, all members of the organization except the Wangs (kings) were not allowed to live with their families and were organized into separated quarters either for men or for women. None but those above the rank of minister were permitted to get married.

Ku Shen, a commoner, who was captured by the Taipings and then escaped, reports in his Hu-hsüeh sheng-huan chi:

"...The boy guide again took me to visit various places...we saw groups of women roaming the street. The women were beautifully dressed and made up, but some seemed to be very happy and others depressed and worried. The boy said that they were the wives of the 'Long Hairs' (Taipings)...I asked him that if all the 'Long Hairs' might be allowed to marry. The boy said that only those above the rank of minister might have wives and they should first petition the T'ien Wang, those below that rank could not have wives."<sup>4</sup>

The families were not allowed to reunite and marriage was not permitted until the Spring of 1855.<sup>5</sup> At that time, the Tung Wang (Eastern King) claimed that the Heavenly Father had descended upon him; then he said that the Heavenly Father had graciously granted the Taipings the right to marry. Thus, he sent out an order allowing men and women to reunite their families or to get married.

Tu Wen-lan, an official of the Ch'ing government, in his P'ing-ting yüeh-fei chi-lüeh, Appendix III told the

story for Tung Wang's order:

"From Chin-t'ien to Chin-ling, the rebels kept the men and women strictly apart; even husbands and wives were to be executed if they were found sleeping together which was against the Heavenly commandments. They were afraid that if their soldiers were concerned about their families, they would not give their all in battle, so they established the women's quarters which followed the army in order to keep a hold on them... In the first month of the fifth year of Hsien-feng (1855), Tseng Shui-yuan, T'ien-kuan ch'eng-hsiang (minister of the Heaven Department) lost his position because of his delay in reaching Wu-hu. His younger brother resenting the action and regretting having joined himself fled. The chief rebel was angry, and thinking that Shui-yuan was behind his brother's scheme, had him executed. He then asked his confidants as to why even the old members were deserting like the new members. The answer was that the leaders had promised the rebels at Yung-an that when they arrived in Chin-ling it would be like ascending to paradise, where husbands and wives would be allowed to reunite. Now they were in Chin-ling they were still denied the right of living with their families, and it was feared that from now on the number of deserters would increase. The chief rebel then sent an order permitting them to get married. Official match-makers were appointed to take charge of the affairs..."

Apparently, the main reasons for Tung Wang's order were to stop the escape of the Taiping members and keep them from complaining about the segregation of sexes. Thus, he allowed people to reunite with their families or get married.

The main purpose of the Taiping marriage remains unknown, because there is no evidence available. However, under the influence of tradition, its main purpose was possibly the same as that of the tradition marriage--the perpetuation of the ancestor's lineage.



Similar to the system of Chou-kuan,<sup>6</sup> the official match-makers were appointed to take charge of the marriage arrangements. Both men and women between fifteen and fifty might report to the office to be matched. Marriage was based on individual differences. According to one's rank and accumulated merit (e.g. achievements in the battlefield), a person who was of higher ranking or/and had merit might have more than one young, beautiful wife; a person who had neither rank nor merit might just have an old, ugly one. A man might have several wives, but a woman could not have more than one husband. The method of assigning was by lot drawn by the official match-makers. As a result, the people, especially the common people who had neither rank nor accumulated merit, seldom had their own choice in marriage. It was reported that quite a few women committed suicide because of an unsatisfactory marriage.<sup>7</sup>

However, Lin-le, an Englishman whose actual name was Augustus F. Lindley and who joined the Taipings in 1860 and left again in 1864, wrote in his book, Ti-ping Tien-kwoh:

"...As a natural consequence of the absence of restraint in the enjoyment of female society, marriage amongst the Ti-pings are generally love matches. Even in cases where a chief's daughter is given in alliance to some powerful leader. Compulsion is never used, and the affianced are given every opportunity to become acquainted with each other."<sup>8</sup>

It seems safe to say that some Taipings of higher rank after 1860 might have enjoyed this kind of marriage

which Lin-le described.<sup>9</sup> The freedom of marriage seems correlative with the status. However, as previously shown, the system of Taiping marriage from the beginning until the end of the Kingdom was not based on free choice. There is not any sufficient evidence found among the common people to support Lin-le's opinion that the matches among the Taipings were generally "love matches" or that the Taipings exercised free choice.

A person who intended to get married had to apply for a marriage certificate. Without a marriage certificate, no marriage ceremony might be held. In other words, marriage among the Taipings had to get official permission.<sup>10</sup>

The marriage certificate which was called Lung-feng ho-hui would be divided into two identical parts--one part as a record kept by the government, and the other belonging to the married couple. Before it was divided, an official stamp and a marriage number were placed across the seam in the middle of the certificate. The groom's and bride's names, their ages, places of birth, positions, and years of participation in the revolution were written on it. On the other hand, the Manchu government did not provide any official certificate for a married couple in the Manchu controlled areas.

The acknowledgment of wedding presents (a list of presents sent) called Li-shu-t'ieh was currently used among

people in the Ch'ing dynasty. The Taiping marriage certificate was different from the "Li-shu-t'ieh" of the traditional marriage in that family backgrounds--of a well-matched matrimonial alliance--had to be written on the "Li-shu-t'ieh". The Taiping marriage certificate gave no emphasis to a person's previous family backgrounds.<sup>11</sup> The Taiping marriage seemed to disregard the distinction of classes, whereas the difference between classes was emphasized by the traditional Chinese marriage; for example a marriage between the family of a poor peasant and the family of a rich governmental officer was considered definitely unsuitable in a traditional marriage.

According to "T'ien-chao t'ien-mou chih-tu" (the Land System of the Heavenly Dynasty, 1853), a public storehouse and a chapel should be established in every twenty-five families. The marriage ceremony would be held at the chapel and the platoon-chief (the head of a group of twenty-five families) was in charge of the affair. Every one should submit his (or her) private property to the public storehouse which was an institution of common property. A marriage would be at the expense of the public storehouse and the married couple given 1000 cash and 100 catties (1 catty =  $1\frac{1}{3}$  lbs; namely chin) of grain. Under this common property system, there would not be any competition for property in a marriage. "The Land System of the Heavenly

Dynasty" stated that a marriage would not be contracted on the basis of wealth. However, the evidence shows us that the common property system was practiced at the beginning of the rebellion only. Moreover, marriage was not allowed to most members of the movement until 1855. As mentioned before, in the Introduction, the Taiping society was stratified. After they arrived in Chin-ling in 1853, the common property system did not restrict the officers of higher rank (e.g. kings and ministers). Gradually, it could not even prohibit the officers of low rank from accumulating wealth. Therefore, the marriage based on common property was an ideal rather than a practice.

In T'ien-t'iao shu (The Book of Heavenly Commandments), there was a kind of prayer for the marriage ceremony. The bride, wearing a green dress, and the groom, wearing red, had to pray to God. There was a table on which were two candles and food. After the ceremony, the food was consumed by the members present.<sup>12</sup> However, the details of the marriage ceremony before 1859 are unknown.

Because of reforms initiated by Kan Wang (Shield King), Hung Jen-kan, the marriage ceremony after 1859 became similar to that of the Church of England. Besides platoon-chiefs, the religious officers, who were equivalent to ministers, were the witnesses of the marriages.<sup>13</sup> Lin-le described the Taiping marriage as follows:

"A plebeian Ti-ping is allowed but one wife, and to her he must be regularly married by one of the ministers. Amongst the chiefs, marriage is a ceremony celebrated with much pomp and festivity; the poorer classes can only marry when considered worthy, and when permitted to do so by their immediate rulers. In contradistinction to the Manchoos, the marriage knot when once tied can never be unloosed; therefore, the custom of putting away a wife at pleasure, or selling her--as in vogue among the Chinese--or the proceedings of the British Court of Divorce, has not found favour in their sight...(Lin-le, 1866, pp. 301-302)...

Marriage among the Ti-pings is solemnized with remarkable strictness, and the ceremony is performed by an officiating priest, or rather presbyter. All the heathen and superstitious customs of the Chinese are completely relinquished. The ancient customs by which marriage were celebrated--the semi-civilized espousal of persons who had never previously seen each other; the choice of a lucky day; the present of purchase--money, any many others--are abolished. Those only that seem to be retained are the tying up of the bride's long black tresses, hitherto worn hanging down, and the bridegroom's procession at night, with music, lanterns, sedan-chairs, and a cavalcade of friends (and in the case of chiefs, banners and military honours), to fetch home his spouse.

...I have frequently seen the marriage ceremony performed, and I can only say that, excepting the absence of the ring, it forms as close and veritable an imitation of that practised by the Church of England as it is possible to imagine. When the bridal party are all met together, they proceed to the church (i.e. "The Heavenly Hall", within the official dwelling of each mayor of a village or circle of twenty-five families, excepting in the case of chiefs who are married in their own hall), and after many prayers and a severe examination of the bride and bridegroom's theological tenets, the minister joins their right hands together, and when each have accepted the other, pronounces a concluding benediction in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To the best of my belief divorce is not only not permitted, but actually unknown or thought of. Adultery is punishable with death; and it may be that this is the only case in which the Ti-pings consider a complete release a vinculo matrimonii justifiable."<sup>14</sup>

Monogamy might have been prevailing among Taiping soldiers because they were allowed to have one wife only. But the Taiping kings themselves practiced polygyny with the exception of Kan Wang who practiced monogamy and even advocated<sup>15</sup> it.

However, there was no evidence of practicing polygyny among the Taipings in the earlier period of the rebellion before 1851. The practice of polygyny began in 1851 when they conquered Yung-an. In order to obtain the religious permission to practice polygyny, at that time Tung Wang, Yang Hsiu-ch'ing said that the Heavenly Father (God) had descended upon him and ordered their kings to have more than one wife. Afterwards, polygyny prevailed among those people for whom it was permitted.

There were regulations as to the number of wives each Taiping officer was allowed to have. According to Hsieh Chieh-ho, a pro-Manchu commoner, in his Chin-ling kuei-chia chi-shih lüeh which gave the information about Chin-ling between 1853 and 1854, the T'ien Wang and Tung Wang were each entitled to have six wives.

After 1855, when the separate women's quarters were dissolved, even ministers, relatives of the Wangs and the officers who had accumulated merit were allowed to have more than one wife too. In 1861, the T'ien Wang decreed that the sons of the Tung Wang and the Hsi Wang (both of these two

kings had died) were entitled to have eleven wives each; the other Wangs, six; high-ranking officials, three; and low-ranking officers, one.<sup>17</sup> At the end of the Kingdom, Yu Wang (T'ien Wang's son) reported that the T'ien Wang had eighty-eight wives, and he himself was given four wives even when<sup>18</sup> he was nine years old.

Polygyny can be regarded as a form of social distinction as mentioned above. Moreover, Chang Te-chien, an officer of the Ch'ing army, accused it as a licentious system, and he made comments as follows:

"The Wangs [Kings] collected about them numerous wives and concubines and yet deprived their subordinates of the source of human relationship. They falsely promised their subordinates that when they succeeded they would be granted the right to marry... Those who had accumulated great merit would be allowed to have extra women... Violators of the Heavenly commandments were often pardoned if they had been valuable to the rebels, but they were punished by having their marriages delayed for three years after everybody else had been given the right to marry; and they were not permitted to have any extra women... By granting them the right to have wives the subordinates would fight to the utmost in order to have their desires satisfied.<sup>19</sup>

According to Chang's report in Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan, chuan 2, Meng Te-en, Ch'un-kuan ch'eng-hsiang (minister of the Spring Department) was commissioned to find beautiful women for the Kings.

Compared with some emperors in Chinese history (such as Chin Wu Ti, Sui Yang Ti, T'ang Hsuan Tsung, etc.) T'ien Wang had fewer wives, court ladies or royal concubines.

Unlike Han Kuang Wu, Sung Jen Tsung, Ming Hsüan Tsung, Ch'ing Kao Tsung or Ch'ien Lung, T'ien Wang did not abandoned his first wife, the queen, Lai Shih. All of his other wives were also regarded as queens and called Niang-niang (queen), but their positions were inferior to Lai Shih and they were obliged to obey her.

The palace-rules, such as those that urged each person to desist from evil, to obey T'ien Wang's orders, and to accept Lai Shih's instructions, had to be observed. Anyone who violated these rules would be severely punished, sometimes even put to death.<sup>20</sup> T'ien Wang's superintendence over the court ladies was cruel in some instances. In an episode recorded in "T'ien-fu hsia-fan chao-shu", for example, T'ien Wang was accused by Tung Wang of his brutal treatment of court ladies.<sup>21</sup> However, the misconduct of women in T'ien Wang's palace seldom occurred; perhaps this was due to the forced adherence to the rules.

There were a few foreign observers who made favorable comments on the practice of polygyny by the Taipings. Lin-le, for example, said:

"...Although the practice of polygamy has by some war Christians been used as an argument to justify murdering the Ti-pings, I do not remember an instance in which those ultra-moral personages have endeavoured to teach the Ti-pings the difference between the law of well-beloved Abraham's time, upon which many of their religious rules are framed, and the later dispensation of the Gospel. It is, however, a great mistake to imagine that the Ti-pings are either con-



firmed or universal polygamists. In the first place, as they have thrown off all the other heathen practices of their countrymen, there is no reason to suppose they would make this an exception. In the second place, I know that many who have become enlightened by the New Testament, have abandoned polygamy; while a vast number of the rest, only partially instructed, are either averse to it, or simply maintain the establishment of one principal and several inferior wives, or concubines, according to ancient custom, and as a mark of high rank. It is also a fact that in some countries a plurality of wives is rather beneficial than otherwise; and it may be that China is one of these. But above all, however detestable we may consider polygamy, where is the Divine command against it?<sup>22</sup>

Thomas T. Meadows is another commentator. He stated in his The Chinese and Their Rebellions as follows:

"...they have learnt their Christianity from the Bible, and that, while polygamy is authorized again and again in the Old Testament by the highest examples, it is nowhere prohibited in the New Testament. The third chapter of the first Epistle to Timothy recommends bishops and deacons to have one wife only, but it does not declare it to be a positive sin on their part to have more than one; while it does imply that other men--not bishops or deacons--may have more than one wife, and yet be received as members of the Christian community. Further, in the Chinese translation, the word wife is rendered by ts'e, the name of the wife proper (the Sarah) in China, of whom Confucian Chinese can only have one. Of the tsée [chien], the concubines (or Hagers) nothing is said in the injunction referred to. What amount of insight into our interpretation of the Bible and into our views of domestic or conjugal morality, Hung sew tseuen may have received during his two months stay with Mr. Roberts, we know not. He did not attract Mr. Roberts' particular attention. But we do know that he must often have been told that the Bible is the highest standard of religion and morality--that it was wholly the word of God. This being the case, the history of David, the chosen of God, with seven tse or wives and ten tsée or concubines, was of itself enough to refute in his mind,

anything that he may have heard against polygamy or concubinage from the Europeans of the present day. And in this particular, the Chinese Sacred Records of that period when Shang te was still worshipped in China, corroborated the Sacred Books of the West. For as in the East, the revered ancient monarch, Yaou, gave his two daughters as wives to his chosen successor, the equally revered ancient monarch, Shun; so in the West, Laban had given his two daughters to Jacob, the progenitor of David and of Jesus.<sup>23</sup>

The life of the Hakka women suggests the Taiping view on marriage. Apparently, poverty prevented the Hakka from practicing polygyny and restricted them to monogamy. The promotion of monogamy by Kan Wang, a devout Christian, is another element which is responsible for the practice of  
24  
monogamy.

However, as long as monogamy was a matter of necessity rather than of principle, it did not prevent the Taipings from practicing polygyny whenever their wealth and status permitted. Polygyny which had been practised by monarchs, officers and rich people for thousands years in China served as a distinction of wealth and status. As in other dynasties, polygyny in the Taiping society had the same social function.

The Taiping leaders suggested monogamy as a practice for the common people; on the other hand, they themselves generally practiced polygyny. Instead of positively encouraging people to practice monogamy, they disposed women as rewards for those who had accumulated merit. These kinds of

contradictions in their policies may have explained why monogamy did not become the only legal marriage institution and why polygyny became the symbol of wealth and status in the Taiping society.

#### A Comparison between the Traditional and the Taiping Marriages

In comparing the traditional marriage with the Taiping marriage, one may find a number of characteristics of the Taiping marriage system, which were different from the traditional one. 1) A marriage in the Taiping Kingdom had to be registered and an official certificate was issued to the married couple. On the other hand, a traditional marriage in Ch'ing Dynasty had neither registration nor official certificate. In other words, a Taiping marriage was a concern of the authorities of the state, while a traditional marriage was rather a family affair which was not so much interfered in by the government. 2) A Taiping marriage was in principle at the expense of the common property while a traditional marriage was completely at the expense of the families concerned. 3) The traditional six ceremonies were not mentioned in the Taiping marriage system, instead, the Taiping marriage ceremonies after 1859 were similar to that of the Church of England. However, there were similarities between the traditional marriage system and the Taiping marriage institution. For instance, polygyny was permitted by both systems; there

were no institutional grounds for a woman to obtain a divorce or remarriage under either system.

### The Position and Roles of Women in a Traditional Family

The traditional Chinese society was dominated by the patrilineal family system. Within the household there was a definite hierarchy of authority and deference governed by the principles of seniority of generation and male dominance. The position and roles of a woman were succinctly demonstrated in a Confucian dogma of San-tsung (three forms of dependence)--before marriage she depends on her father for living; after marriage she depends on her husband; and after the death of her husband, she depends on her son. In other words, women should be subordinate to men and should not be independent in any sense. Except for her claim to a dowry, a woman did not have the right of succession to any family property. A girl in her everyday activities learned to venerate the people of senior generations, and older siblings and cousins of the same generation. She also learned that her place was secondary to male children of the same generation. Marrying into a family, she had to submit herself first and foremost to the authority of her parents-in-law and secondarily to that of her husband and all other elders in the family. She was judged on her adequacy as a daughter-in-law and put in a competitive position with any other daughters-in-law. In this critical

stage of her life, she had the support and comfort of no one nearby, not even her husband whose first duty and loyalty was to his parents. In cases of complaints of maltreatment, the wife's family usually counseled patience and forbearance or even sided with the husband's family in order to prevent an open feud between the two families.

With the birth of a son, because she fulfilled her duty in perpetuating the ancestral lineage and found protection and security in the future of the son, her fate would be improved. Without a male child, her position as a wife in traditional times could be jeopardized by the family's decision to bring in a secondary wife or concubine, to ensure continuity of the male line.

When a woman became a mother-in-law with authority over her son's wife, she might make up for her earlier disadvantages. As a grandmother, she was usually the supreme woman in the household.

A teenage girl in a traditional family usually had to learn tailoring and various kinds of housework before she got married. As a wife, she had to do almost everything within a house if her husband was not rich enough to hire (or buy) servants. Among the peasants and the urban poor, women were relatively less dominated by the hierarchy of family elders. For economic reasons, they also had to undertake more activities in the family enterprise, whether farming or shop-

keeping. In many peasant families, the wives worked as maids in town to earn the cash income for home. The over-all effect of this economic necessity was that woman from the low socio-economic level had a greater voice in family affairs and greater freedom to make social contacts in the village or trading places. Nevertheless, these women had to play a secondary role to surviving male elders, especially, in formal and public matters outside the family.

In the traditional society, a woman's social status rose or fell with the fortunes of her parental family. She could also improve her class status through marriage or through the academic success of her husband. In other words, she could enhance her own social status only when the status of her family or her husband had improved.<sup>25</sup>

#### The Position and Roles of Women in a Taiping Family

The Taiping family system was possibly a patrilineal system also. Its important principles which determined the hierarchy of authority were the seniority of generation and male dominance. Like a traditional family, the position and roles of women in a Taiping family changed according to the different life stages--as a girl, a wife, a daughter-in-law, a mother, or a grandmother. For example, a daughter-in-law was usually in a difficult position in which she was subject to constant criticisms from her mother-in-law. Generally

speaking, no matter how improved a woman's position would become, her status in a family was secondary to the men of senior generation and of her own.

Within a family, the relationship between husband and wife, for instance, remained unchanged. Following the traditional way, the Taipings adopted the principle of San-ts'ung. Hung Hsiu-ch'üan's Yu-hsueh-shih (Ode for Youth) stated:

"...the way of a wife lies in san-ts'ung, she is not supposed to disobey her husband."<sup>26</sup>

The principle of the attitudes of a husband and a wife toward each other conforms to the idea expressed in Li-chi, the husband is to be just and the wife has to be obedient. Mencius' idea of characterizing the husband-wife relation by distinction was apparently applied by the Taipings to the relationship between man and woman in general. For instance, Yu-hsueh-shih said:

"The male principle consists of firmness and sternness or respectability and the position of a male is outside the house; he should be above all suspicion... The female principle consists in Chastity, and a woman should not go near men. Solitary, calm, and dignified, she obtains her place inside the household; living in this way, she will enjoy her auspicious luck."<sup>27</sup>

Women in traditional Chinese society were expected to do some home handiwork, so were the Taiping women, "T'ien-ch'ao t'ien-mou chih-tu" stipulated:

"...throughout the empire the mulberry tree is to be planted beneath the walls, so that all women

shall raise silkworms, spin cloth and sew dresses..."<sup>28</sup>

The evidence as mentioned above shows us that the Taiping family was still dominated by Chinese tradition.

However, a Taiping woman, as a family member, enjoyed equal rights in the distribution of land. In "T'ien-ch'ao t'ien-mou chih-tu" (The Land System of the Heavenly Dynasty, 1853), the distribution of land was made according to the size of the family, irrespective of sex. The larger the number of family members the more land they would receive; the smaller the number, the less the amount of land. For every person, male or female, of sixteen years of age or upward, a certain portion of land would be allotted; for anyone who was fifteen years of age or under, half that quantity was given.<sup>29</sup> Whether or not a Taiping woman could inherit the family property is unknown. Theoretically, no family could have any private property, because they practised a common sharing system. However, because the common treasury system was not thoroughly carried out, the problem of succession to the family property would have evolved. Since the Taiping women had equal rights in the distribution of land, it is possible that they had equal rights in the succession to the family property also.

In the distribution of land, the Taiping women had the same rights as men, but in marriage, they were not on an equal footing and were considered rewards for men who had



accumulated merit. It is unclear why and how this contradiction came about simply because of the lack of relevant evidence. But it was probably because of their principle of common sharing, which did not allow anyone to accumulate private wealth, so that the Taiping leaders could not use money (or goods) as rewards. Thus, they used women as rewards, and were not consistent in their policies of land and marriage.

For women to have equal rights in the distribution of land was a new idea which had not appeared in Chinese history until T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo. For example, the land systems of Chou, Hsin Mang, Pei Wei, Pei Ch'i, Tsin, Sui, or T'ang did not offer equal rights for both sexes in the distribution of land. The Ch'ing government did not provide equal rights for women either. Therefore, if one wants to distinguish the Taiping Land System from others, the equality of the sexes in the distribution of land must be the main characteristic. However, the Land System of the Heavenly Dynasty was not carried out,<sup>30</sup> consequently, the idea of equality in land distribution was not realized.

#### Comparison and Summary

In sum, a Taiping marriage had to get official approval. It was arranged by the official match-makers. Except for some of higher rank, people seldom had free choice.

The marriage ceremony at least in principle was held in a church at the expense of the common treasury. Polygyny as well as monogamy, was a legal form of marriage, but was not permitted among the common people (or the soldiers). Women were regarded as rewards for men in the practice of polygyny. The characteristics mentioned above illustrate how the Taiping marriage differed from the traditional marriage. Under the standards of freedom and equality for both sexes, it can be seen that little progress was made in terms of the improvement of women's position.

There is no evidence to show that the structure of the Taiping family was different from that of the traditional family. The limited materials indicate that the Taiping family system was based on Confucian teachings of kinship relationship. The position of women in a Taiping family was the same as in a traditional family with only one exception, that as a family member, a woman had equal rights in the distribution of land.

After considering the Taiping marriage and family system, and comparing it to the traditional system, it can be seen the position of woman, as far as their rights and treatment in marriage or in the family are concerned, remained unimproved.

## FOOTNOTES

1. cf. T'zu Hai, p. 343 and Ch'en Tung-yuan, 1935, p. 43.
2. cf. T'zu Hai, p. 16.
3. Because of the limited space, this short report can not give the information about the traditional marriage and family in detail. For further information, one may see Lee Shu-ching "China's traditional Family: its Characteristics and Disintegration" in America Sociology Review, Vol. 18, 1935; Lin Yueh-hwa, The Golden Wing, 1948; Wolf, Marjorie, The House of Lin, 1968; Pratt, J.A. "Emigration and Unilineal Descent Groups: A Study of Marriage in a Hakka Village in the New Territories, Hong Kong" in The Eastern Anthropologist, Vol. XIII, No. 4, 1960; Levy Jr., M.J., The Family Revolution in Modern China, 1949; Freedman, Maurice, Rites and Duties of Chinese Marriage, 1967; Chai Ch'u and Chai, Winberg, The Changing Society of China, 1962; and Yang, C.K., Chinese Communist Society: The Family and the Village, 1959.
4. Hsiang Ta et al. (editors), T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo, 1952, Vol. VI. p. 736.
5. Li Ch'un, T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo chih-tu ch'u-t'an, 1963, p. 502.
6. The initial title of Chou-li, also called Chou Kuan Ching. The book described the political and military system of the Chou dynasty. (cf. Tz'u Hai, pp. 570-571.) This book was one of the main sources from which the Taipings borrowed ideas for their political and military institutions. However, sometimes the Taipings merely borrowed the titles, discarding entirely the "content" of these titles. For example, the Taipings used the titles of the six ministers of the Chou-kuan--t'ien-kuan, ti-kuan, ch'un-kuan, hsia-kuan, ch'iu-kuan, and tung-kuan,--but these offices did not necessarily fulfil the same functions as those of Chou-kuan. The functions of the head of the T'ien-kuan Department, as defined in the Chou-kuan, was that he should be charged with the government of the state and the duty of assisting the king to give equity to the whole country. But in the Taiping system, Tseng Ch'ai-yang, the second assistant minister of the T'ien-kuan Department, was, in the same year, Yu-chang ch'ao-i in charge of court rituals. Rituals, according to the Chou-kuan system, were supervised by Ch'un kuan. An attempt to define the functions of the Taiping ministers by inquiring into what they were actually

charged to do reveals that, with few exceptions, they were primarily entrusted with military affairs. According to the Chou-kuan system they should all have been given the title of hsia-kuan. In brief, the functions and relative positions of the Taiping ministers and their offices are vague. For detail, see Shih, Vincent Y.C., The Taiping Ideology, 1967, pp. 253-268; and Hsieh Hsing-yao, T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo ti she-hui cheng-chih ssu-hsiang, 1935, pp. 20-22.

7. The specific numbers (e.g. 100, 1000, etc.) are unknown. The books which mentioned this event as follows: Wang T'ao, Wen-yu yü-t'an and Tu Wen-lan, 1871, Appendix III, in Vincent Shih, 1967, pp. 70-71; Hsieh Hsing-yao, 1935, pp. 21-22.
8. Lin-le, Ti-ping Tien-kwoh, 1866, p. 317.
9. Because Lin-le joined the Taiping in 1860 and left in 1864. What he observed would not be before 1860.
10. Lo Erh-kang, T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo wen-wu t'u-shih, 1956, pp. 225-227.
11. Ibid. p. 227.
12. Jen Yu-wen, T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo t'ien-chih t'ung-k'ao, 1958. p. 1242.
13. Ibid. 1958, p. 1243; Lin-le, 1866, p. 540.
14. Lin-le, 1861, pp. 317-18.
15. Jen Yu-wen, 1958, p. 1260.
16. Ibid. pp. 1250-1255.
17. Kuo Ting-i, 1947, Vol. 2, p. 748.
18. Shih, Vincent, 1967, p. 70.
19. Chang, Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan, chuan 12, in Hsiang Ta, 1952, Vol. III, p. 313.
20. Jen Yu-wen, 1958, pp. 1259-1266.
21. "T'ien-fu hsia-fan chao-shu" in Hsiang Ta, 1952, Vol. I. pp. 23-56.

22. Lin-le, 1866, pp. 300-301.
23. Meadows, 1856, pp. 443-444.
24. Lin-le, 1866, p. 540.
25. For more information about the position of women in the traditional Chinese family, see Patai, Raphael, Women in the Modern World, 1967, pp. 410-33; Van Den Sprenkel, Sybille, Legal Institutions in Manchu China, 1962; Ayscough, Florence, Chinese Women, Yesterday & Today, 1938; Yang, C.K., Chinese Communist Society: The Family and The Village, 1959; Snow, H.F., Women in Modern China, 1967; Lang, Olga, Chinese Family and Society, 1964.
26. Hsiao I-shan, 1956, Vol. I, p. 444.  
Yu-hsueh-shih (Ode for Youth) was written by Hung Hsiu-ch'uan (the Heavenly King). The Taiping social relationships are presented in this book. The book first takes up man's reverent relationship to God and Jesus. Next, filial piety is considered, defining the attitude of a son in his relationship to his parents. Then other relationships are described, based upon the general concept of filial piety.
27. Ibid. p. 447.
28. Cheng J.C., 1963, p. 40.
29. T'ien-ch'ao t'ien-mou chih-tu in Lo Erh-kang, 1950, p. 2.
30. Shih, Vincent, 1967, pp. 489-490.

## CHAPTER II

### WOMEN'S QUARTERS

#### The Establishment of the Separate Quarters and Their Basic Aims

Separate quarters for men and women were established as early as the assembling of the rebels at Chin-t'ien, Kuei-p'ing Hsien, Kwangsi--the original site of the rebellion, in 1850. The duty of the men's quarters was fighting, while that of the women's, mainly subordinate work connected with fighting and fighting too if it was necessary. The boys who still had to rely on their mothers for support were organized into women's quarters, otherwise they belonged in men's. Both men's and women's quarters were instituted as military systems.

The segregation of sexes was one of the distinguishing features of Taiping society. When the Taipings established separate quarters for men and women, they proclaimed the "Ten Important Regulations for the Stationary Quarter". The fifth of these regulations stipulated that one must observe the separation between the men's and women's quarters.<sup>1</sup>

Tung Wang admonished the people for wanting families of their own before they had their own country and advised them to forget selfish interest in the considerations of the public. Men and women had to be separated in order to avoid the possibility of adultery and the violation of the Heavenly

<sup>2</sup>  
Commandments. Sometimes, visiting was allowed, but they were permitted only to talk at the door at a certain distance.

The Taiping leaders were firm in their conviction. From Chin-t'ien to Chin-ling, they kept the men and women strictly apart--even husbands and wives were considered adulterers if they were found sleeping together, and were executed for violating the Heavenly Commandments. However, it was quite evident that some people still disregarded the segregation and violated the rules. For example, Ch'en Tsung-yang, Tung-kuan fu-ch'eng-hsiang (the Deputy minister of the Winter Department), lost his life for staying with his wife overnight,<sup>3</sup> and in 1851, Hsi Wang, Hsiao Ch'ao-kuei, had even<sup>4</sup> his parents tried and executed for the same violation.

#### Reasons for the Establishment of the Separate Quarters

First, the Taiping might have recognized the effect of family burdens on the efficiency of the fighting force and the advantages of separating the sexes in fighting. Therefore, in addition to not allowing their people to live with their families or to get married, they instituted separate quarters for them.<sup>5</sup> The measure adopted by the Taipings was actually devised for political or military control. Separate quarters for women and men were initiated to increase the efficiency of the society as a fighting machine.

Second, they regarded adultery as the greatest of

all sins. The prohibition of adultery was one of their most serious doctrines. The seventh Heavenly Commandment stated, "Thou shalt not commit adultery", and the note added:

"All men in the world are brothers and all women are sisters. With regard to the children in paradise, men must go to the men's quarters and women must go to the women's. They must not intermingle. Men or women who commit adultery are 'turning into devils'. The greatest violation against the Heavenly Commandments is casting evil eyes and having a lustful heart."<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, the poem attached to the seventh Heavenly Commandment said:

"Adultery is the greatest of all sins, and nothing is more pitiable than being transformed into a devil."

The establishment of separate quarters served as a measure for prohibiting adultery.

Third, the women's quarters kept the soldiers' relatives (mothers, wives, sisters and children) as hostages. If anyone violated the military regulations or surrendered to the enemy, not only he himself, but also his relatives were implicated in the crime and punished. For fear of involving his relatives, a soldier had to be careful of what he did. Therefore, the establishment of women's quarters might also be regarded as a device for preventing soldiers from surrendering and violating rules.<sup>7</sup>

Fourth, in the later period of T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo after 1860, some women's quarters still existed in the



principal cities (e.g. Chin-ling). Protection of the women would have been the main reason for their existence. According to Lin-le, every woman in the Kingdom should either be married, the member of a family, or a resident of one of the women's quarters. No single woman was allowed to live by herself. The institutions were particularly organized and designed to educate and protect the young girls who lost their natural guardians, married women whose husbands were away upon public duties, and those who had no relatives to protect and support them.

#### The Organization of Women's Quarters

Ming Te-en, Ch'un-kuan-ch'eng-hsiang (the Minister of the Spring Department), was appointed to be commander-in-chief of the women's quarters in Chin-ling. There were also a few older male officers in charge of the affairs of the women's quarters called Nu-ying hsun-ch'a (inspectors of women's quarters).<sup>9</sup> Within the women's quarters, there were female officers, for the most part from Kwangsi, Kwangtung or Hunan, in charge of the actual daily guidance and inspection. The basic unit of the women's quarter was composed of twenty-five women led by one Nu liang-ssu-ma (female platoon-chief).<sup>10</sup>

The control of segregation of the quarters was severely strict. Tu Wen-lan, in his P'ing-t'ing yueh-fei

chi-lüeh stated the following:

"The rebels were very strict in the separation of sexes. The men captured during a campaign were organized into the men's quarters under the supervision of the general; the captured women were organized into women's quarters in the rear, under the control of the women from Kwangsi. The control was greatly tightened when they arrived in Chin-ling, much more strict than when they were on the march. Occasionally, some men made their way into the women's quarters by stealth, but the quarters were daily investigated and numbered and were strictly supervised in the name of the chief of the quarters. Their register was presented to the Imperial Decree Board for inspection every month. Therefore, even the old rebels from Kwangsi dared not disturb the order. Many girls from great families were thus able to keep their character."

As mentioned before, the women's quarters were established as military institutions, thus, there were female officers of several ranks which were classified into two categories--Ch'ao-nei nü-kuan (Women Court Officials) and Chün-chung nü-kuan (Women Field Officers). Since the Women Court Officials were not organized into women's quarters after the Taipings arrived in Chin-ling, they will be discussed later in Chapter IV.

The system of the women's army corps was as follows:

The women were organized into five sections--left, right, front, rear and middle, with eight army corps for each. There were forty women army corps in total. Each army included one superintendent, one inspector, one commander, 25 company-chiefs, 100 platoon-chiefs, and 2500 soldiers.

## The Ranking of the Women Field Officers

### First Rank:

Nü tsung-chih (Women Corps Superintendents) (40 members in total)

### Second Rank:

Nü chien-chün (Women Corps Inspectors) (40 members in total)

### Third Rank:

Nü chün-shuai (Women Corps Commanders) (40 members in total)

(each women's army included 2,500 soldiers)

### Fourth Rank:

Nü ts'u-chang (Women Company-Chiefs) (1000 members in total)

(each in charge of 100 women soldiers)

### Fifth Rank:

Nü liang-ssu-ma (Women Platoon-Chiefs) (4000 members in total)

(each in charge of 25 women soldiers)

The women's quarters of Chin-ling included about one hundred thousand women soldiers and five thousand women officers in 1853. Later on, in the summer of 1854, the female troops increased to one hundred and fourteen thousand. It was composed of only about two thousand from Kwangtung or Kwangsi (because most of Kwangtung or Kwangsi women served in the kings' palaces, not in the women's quarters), three hundred from Hunan, twenty thousand from Hupei, two thousand from Anhwei, ten thousand from Chen-chiang and Yang-chou, and

eighty thousand from Chin-ling.<sup>12</sup>

Except those Kwangsi or Kwangtung women who voluntarily joined the rebellion with their families, most of the women were organized into the women's quarters by force.<sup>13</sup>

Once the Taipings conquered a city or occupied an area, they were likely to establish the women's quarters.<sup>14</sup> It was reported that a few women, especially those from the gentry, refused to join the quarters and committed suicide. The Taipings forced people to join their organization, probably because they needed help from both sexes and, in order to enlarge their forces, they took it for granted that drafting people was a legal and normal device.<sup>15</sup>

#### The Function of Women's Quarters

Earlier, in 1853, each woman in a quarter of Chin-ling was allowed one Sheng (a pint) of rice every day. After the summer of 1854, however, each was allowed only 3-6 Liang (one tael or one ounce) because of the lack of food. Work was allotted to everyone according to ability. For example, those who were good at tailoring would be sent to the embroidery camps under Nü hsiu-chin chih-hui (women directors of the embroidery camps). The others were assigned several kinds of work--jobs requiring unskilled labour in general,--such as carrying rice, coal, bricks, and soil; digging ditches

or trenches in warfare; and harvesting, etc..<sup>16</sup> Besides the labour work, women had to join the fighting when it was necessary.

Chung Tai-yün, a poet of that time, mentioned in one of his poems the participation of women and children in the battle of Ts'ai-ts'un-chiang in 1850.<sup>17</sup> There were a few poems written on the top of Tu-hsiu-feng, in Kwangsi, praising the uprising of the Taipings. The following is the one describing the participation of women and children in a battle:

"Midst the troops were women surging forward east and west, War cries were mixed with the voices of children heard near and far."<sup>18</sup>

As early as 1851, two female bandits--Ch'iu Erh-sou and Su San-niang--each one bringing about 2000 followers joined Hung's organization, and were received on submitting<sup>19</sup> to the authority of Hung and the rule of the congregation.

T'ien Wang's decrees, which were issued in Yung-an in 1852,<sup>20</sup> always mentioned to both sexes to be brave in fighting.

According to Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan, the Taipings already had women troops when they were in Yung-an. Most of the women fighters were relatives of the leaders. They wore turbans wrapped around their heads, climbed the cliffs barefooted and were much braver than the men. They actually took part in the battles and often inflicted great damage on the

21

government troops.

When the Taipings arrived in Wu-ch'ang, Hupei in 1852, women still joined the fighting. Chen Hui-yen, a commoner, in his Wu-ch'ang chi-shih said:

"Women also occupied official positions similar to that of men. Sometimes they also went out to fight wearing red silk head-dresses and grass sandals and they were quite brave.<sup>22</sup>

Chang Pin-yuan, a spy of the Ch'ing government, in one of his letters to Hsiang Jung, a commander of the Ch'ing army, told us how brave the Taiping women in Chin-ling in 1853 were. He made a suggestion to Hsiang Jung:

"When the city falls, all the Kwangsi women should be put to death and no mercy should be shown to them, because these women are all brave and fierce and have acted as soldiers in defending the city."

Between 1853 and 1856, Cheng-chiang was besieged by the Ch'ing army. During that time, most of the soldiers who guarded Chen-chiang were women. The Ch'ing army was often beaten by the women soldiers when it made attacks on  
24  
the city.

According to Ti fou tao jen, a commoner, in his Chin-ling tsa chi, there were many women in the kings' palaces. The bravest and fiercest were the relatives of the Kwangsi rebels. Those women were good at fighting and guarded the kings during the internal strife of 1856. Pei Wang's soldiers who attacked T'ien Wang's palace were defeated by his women  
25  
soldiers.

Besides the Chinese sources mentioned above, the foreign documentations also indicate the existence of women soldiers. Lin-le's Ti-ping T'ien-kwoh, for example, states:

"...to behold leagued together, not only the effeminate Chinese but even their women--wives and daughters fighting by the side of their husbands and fathers, inspired by one common hope and ardour--all animated by a great religious and political object for the attainment of which they had suffered and fought many years--is an event never before realized in the history of China. ...very many of the women accompany their husbands upon military expeditions, inspired with enthusiasm to share the dangers and severe hardships of the battlefield. In such cases they are generally mounted upon the Chinese ponies, donkeys or mules which they ride a la Duchesse de Berri. In former years they were wont to fight bravely and could ably discharge the duties of officers, being however formed into a separate camp and only joining the men in the religious observances.<sup>26</sup>

In brief, since the beginning of the rebellion, the Taiping women were organized into military groups, they were lead by Kwangsi women and fought against the Ch'ing army as bravely as the male troops. The main reasons for why and how the Taiping women could fight are as follows. First, the Hakka local customs were easily adopted to fighting. Both Hakka men and women were hard workers. Hakka women were used to labour which was usually assigned to men (e.g. tillage),<sup>27</sup> and were accustomed to endure much from their very childhood. Second, the Kingdom offered military positions for women which included several ranks. The women could be promoted through fighting, and this inspired them to fight bravely. Third,

the Kingdom needed women's help. Fourth, under some circumstances, women, as well as men, were forced to fight in order to protect themselves. Fifth, having equal rights to the common property sharing system, the Taiping women would have been equally responsible for a share of the duty of fighting.

### The Dissolution of Women's Quarters

As mentioned in Chapter I, the Taiping leaders had promised their followers in Yung-an that they would be allowed to get married or to reunite with their families after they got to Chin-ling. Unfortunately, the leaders did not keep their promise. In 1854, Tung Wang made another promise and tried to appease his people in the following proclamation:

"...Last spring I led a million picked troops to march to and to establish the foundation (Heavenly Capital--Chin-ling). When the city was captured, I, the Generalissimo, gave strict orders to restrain my troops. They were only permitted to exterminate the devilish (Manchu) officers and soldiers, but not allowed to slaughter even a single good man (Chinese). The troops respectfully obeyed the command of Heaven and you brethren and sisters inside and outside the city-walls whose lives were saved numbered no less than several thousand.

This is because I, the Generalissimo, have understood the merciful heart of the Heavenly Father on high and the limitless compassion of our Lord (the Heavenly King), in conducting this campaign of righteousness to wipe out the evil and save the just. Later, we complied with the desire of Heaven and separated men from women in order to prevent the spread of adultery. This is but a temporary separation; in future when the



criminal slaves (referring to the Manchu in Peking) will have been exterminated, you will again be united. Yet you people consider this as taking away your property and scattering your families. As your wealth is gone and your wives and children have been suddenly scattered, your sounds of sighing and complaining have not ceased. You do not, however, realize that since the days of old, a revolutionary change of dynasty has invariably brought about the utter extermination of inhabitants and complete destruction of all valuables. Blood would have flowed like a river; no chicken or dog would have been left alive. Have there ever been any signs of the Heavenly Dynasty slaughtering people without just cause, or distributing food and clothing without careful discrimination?...<sup>28</sup>

This proclamation shows us that the permission to live with one's family would be delayed until after the conquest of Peking. Thus, the Taiping leaders' ambition to conquer Peking seems to be the main reason for their breaking of the first promise made in Yung-an.

This proclamation also shows us that some people complained about the segregation of sexes, and that Tung Wang tried to soothe them. However, it did not seem to be very effective, for even the old members, who had joined the rebellion at the beginning, were complaining and escaping. Thus, in 1855, Tung Wang sent out an order allowing them to get married or to reunite their families. This order was the immediate cause of the dissolution of the women's quarters.<sup>29</sup>

According to Ling Shan-ch'ing, the women's quarters were dissolved because of the shortage of food and the

inefficiency of the administration.<sup>30</sup>

Huang Chun-tsai, a commoner, in his Chin-hu ch'i-mo mentioned the period of the food shortage as follows:

"...When they were lacking of food, they sent the paler ones out to cut and gather in the grain--as a matter of fact, they [the Taiping leaders] willfully gave them a chance to escape. After a month, the chief rebels again gave orders that the women should be given away in marriage, and officials were appointed to take charge of the arrangements..."<sup>31</sup>

As a matter of fact, giving women away in marriage could not solve the problem of the shortage of food. It only meant that the Taiping authorities left the food problem to the people themselves and freed the authorities from the trouble.

There is no evidence concerning the inefficiency of the administration of the women's quarters.

In order to destroy the Manchu government and reunite the northern part of China, T'ien Wang had sent one expedition to North China with the purpose of capturing Peking in 1853, and these troops were completely defeated in 1855. Because Tung Wang's proclamation of 1854, in which he promised his followers the permission to get married or to reunite their families, depended on the conquest of Peking, he could hardly insist after the defeat that the women's quarters be maintained. This was probably another reason for the dissolution of the women's quarters.

In sum, the women's quarters of Chin-ling were dissolved because of the shortage of food, the permission to

get married or to reunite with their families, and the failure of the northern expedition.

However, the abolition of the women's quarters was restricted to Chin-ling, and it did not mean that they were dissolved completely. After 1855, there were still some quarters for the unprotected women in Chin-ling.<sup>32</sup>

After the dissolution of the women's quarters of Chin-ling, the Taipings still established temporary quarters for women. When they conquered a city or occupied an area, they usually built temporary quarters in order to protect the women and maintain military rules. After things were settled down, then they dismissed the women's quarters.<sup>33</sup>

The evidence indicates that the women's quarters were continued. For example, Fu Wang, Yang Fu-ch'ing, established women's quarters in Shao-wu, Fukien in 1857. And so did Huang Wen-chin in Wu-hu, Anhwei.<sup>34</sup>

Before 1855, the chief functions of the women's quarters had been to carry out subordinate work connected with war, to fight, and to shelter women. After that time, its main function seemed to be that of providing shelter for unprotected women. However this did not cause a basic change in the status of women, because women were still permitted to join the fighting when necessary. Despite the fact that they were living in the women's quarters, women still had to accept the ideas of traditional obligations of the family.

After the dissolution of the women's quarters in 1855, women were allowed to live with their families, thus, they had opportunities to fulfill their family obligations.

#### The Significance of the Taiping Women's Quarters

The establishment of the women's quarters and the participation of women in fighting were two special features of T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo. The former was a new development in Chinese history, the latter was an event seldom found in China in 4000 years--the most famous female fighters were Hua Mu-lan in the Sui dynasty, Liang Hung-yü in the Sung, and Ch'ün Liang-yü in the Ming. However, troops composed of thousands of women had never been found in Chinese history before.

## FOOTNOTES

1. The "Ten Important Regulations of the Stationary Quarter" in the T'ai-p'ing t'iao-kuei (Taiping Rules and Regulations) are as follows:

- (1) Obeying the heavenly orders.
  - (2) Memorizing the heavenly commandments and attending the morning and evening services.
  - (3) Neither smoking nor drinking. Showing good-will to everyone.
  - (4) Being cooperative and obeying senior officers; concealing neither weapons nor gold, silver nor ornaments.
  - (5) Observing the separation between the men's and women's quarters.
  - (6) Memorizing various military signals.
  - (7) Never delaying public business.
  - (8) Practising ceremonial regulations.
  - (9) Always making weapons available.
  - (10) Never misunderstanding national laws (or rules) nor misstating military orders.
- (cf. T'ai-p'ing t'iao-kuei in Hsiao I-shan, 1956, ts'ung-shu, Vol. I, p. 246; Chang Te-chien, Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan in Hsiang Ta, 1952, Vol. 3, pp. 151-52; P'eng Tse-i, 1946, p. 56.)

2. The Taipings made use of the Christian Ten Commandments and called them "Shih-t'ien-t'iao" (Ten Heavenly Precepts or Commandments) as follows:

- (1) Thou shalt worship God.
- (2) Thou shalt not worship perverse spirits.
- (3) Thou shalt not take God's name in vain.
- (4) On the seventh day is the Sabbath, when you must praise God for His goodness.
- (5) Honour thy father and thy mother.
- (6) Thou shalt not kill nor injure people.
- (7) Thou shalt not commit adultery.
- (8) Thou shalt not steal.
- (9) Thou shalt not tell a lie.
- (10) Thou shalt not covet.

(cf. T'ien-ch'ing tao-li shu, Book on the Principles of the Heavenly Nature in Hsiao, 1956; Chang Te-chien, Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan in Hsiang Ta, 1952, Vol. 3, pp. 260-261.)

The Christian Ten Commandments are as follows:

- (1) Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.
- (2) Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything.....Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.....
- (3) Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord they God in vain.
- (4) Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

- (5) Honour thy father and thy mother.
- (6) Thou shalt not kill.
- (7) Thou shalt not commit adultery.
- (8) Thou shalt not steal.
- (9) Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
- (10) Thou shalt not covet.

(cf. Alexander E. Kerr, The Ten Words, Toronto, 1960)

In comparison with the Christian Ten Commandments, we find that the Taiping Ten Heavenly Commandments are very similar. The idea of heavenly commandments was present in ancient times. It is found in the Book of Changes in the phrase, "Then are seen t'ien-tse (heavenly precepts)" and in Tso-chuan, as the expression, t'ien-fa (heavenly laws). The Taipings did not quote any of these phrases exactly, but it is possible that they were conditioned through their early acquaintance with these classical phrases to accept the Christian idea of heavenly percepts. (Shih, 1967, pp. 175-176.)

- 3. cf. Chang, Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan, Chuan 12, in Hsiang Ta, 1952, Vol. III. p. 313.
- 4. cf. Tu Wen-lan, P'ing-ting yueh-fei chi-lueh, 1871, Appendix II, p. 1041.
- 5. cf. Ling Shan-ch'ing, 1923, 18:1.
- 6. "devils" referring to the Manchus. "T'ien-t'iao-shu" in Hsiao I-shan, 1956, Ts'ung-shu, Vol. I, p. 80
- 7. cf. Jen Yu-wen, 1958, p. 1211.
- 8. Lin-le, 1866, p. 302.
- 9. cf. Chang, Ts'e-ch'ing hui-tsuan, Chuan 1 and Chuan 3 in Hsiang Ta, 1952, Vol. III)
- 10. cf. Hsiang Ta, 1952, Vol. IV, p. 665, and Mou An-shih, T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo, 1961, p. 125.
- 11. cf. Chang, Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan, in Hsiang Ta, 1952, Vol. III, pp. 309-310, pp. 109-111; and Shih, Y.C., 1967, pp. 64-65.
- 12. The organization of the women's army corps was slightly different from that of the men's army corps. Each army of men included one superintendent, one inspector, one commander, five brigade-commandants, twenty-five battalion-commandants, one hundred and twenty-five company-chiefs, five hundred

platoon-chiefs, two thousand and five hundred corporals, and ten thousand soldiers. One army of men included 13,158 officers and soldiers in total, while one army of women consisted of 2628. Therefore, one army of women was one-fifth the size of one army of men. The total number of the male troops is unknown. However it is possible that the Kingdom had over one million male troops around the year of 1854. Thus, the total number of female troops was about one-tenth of that of the male troops. (cf. Chang, Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan in Hsiang Ta, 1952, pp. 281-310; P'eng Tse-i, 1946, pp. 42-44.)

13. cf. Kuo T'ing-i, 1947, pp. 236-37. Jen, 1958, pp. 1213-1226.

14. The Taipings could not establish separate quarters for the population of all the cities and villages that they occupied.

The whole population which they controlled was organized into military units of the same size and put under officers who held the same titles and ranks as those of the Taiping male army corps. The difference was, that while the original Taiping force had broken up the family and was made up of single men and women, the units of the general administration were made up of families. Twenty five families formed the basic unit under the command of a local platoon-chief. Four such units, or one hundred families, were under the command of a Company-chief. Five of the hundred-family units were administered by a Battalion-commandant, five of the five-hundred-family units were administered by a Brigade-commandant, and five of the twenty-five-hundred-family units were administered by a Corps-commander. This unit of an army corps was the largest local administrative unit, comparable to the largest unit of the Taiping army. The army unit consisted of 13,156 officers (excluding a superintendent and an inspector) and soldiers, that of the local administrative unit, of 13,156 families and officers (excluding a superintendent and an inspector). (cf. The Land System of the Heavenly Dynasty in Cheng, 1963, pp. 43-44; Michael Franz, 1966, p. 45, and p. 83; P'eng Tse-i, 1946, pp. 42-45.)

15. Jen Yu-wen, 1958, pp. 1215-1216 and pp. 1224-1226.
16. cf. Jen Yu-wen, 1958, p. 1217, and Lo Erh-kang, 1950, p. 42.
17. cf. Hu Ming-shu, T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo chi-i tiao-ch'a pao-kao, 1956, p. 61.

18. Shih, Vincent, Y.C., 1967, p. 61, and Mou An Shih, 1961, p. 76.
19. Jen, 1958, pp. 1273-76. This evidence shows us that these two women commanded male troops. Whether or not they continued to command male troops after joining the Taipings is unknown.
20. cf. T'ien-ming chao-chi shu in Hsiang Ta, 1952, Vol. I, p. 68.
21. Ibid. Vol. III, p. 111.
22. Shih, 1967, p. 69, and Jen, 1958, p. 1213.
23. Lo Erh-kang, 1950, p. 47.
24. cf. Lo Erh-kang, 1955, p. 321.
25. cf. Jen, 1958, p. 1213.  
This evidence indicates that, after the dissolution of the women's quarters, there were still women's troops. However, the number of women's troops was possibly decreased by the dissolution and the women were allowed to join their families when they were not on duty.
26. Lin-le, 1866, p. 89 and p. 303.  
Because the Kingdom had never had a regular troop composed of both sexes, what Lin-le saw would not have been the normal situation.
27. The social customs of Hakka women will be explained later in Chapter VI.
28. Words in brackets are the editor's. Cheng, 1963, pp. 65-67.
29. cf. Tu, P'ing-ting yueh-fei chi-lueh, Appendix III and Wang T'ao, Wen-yu yü-t'an in Jen, 1958, pp. 1227-28.
30. cf. Ling, 1923, Chuan 18, pp. 1-4, and Chuan 20.
31. cf. Shih, 1967, p. 68.
32. cf. Lin-le, 1866, p. 302.
33. cf. Lo Erh-kang, 1955, p. 334.
34. cf. Kuo T'ing-i, 1947, p. 527 and p. 715.



## CHAPTER III

## EDUCATION

## The Traditional Education System

For twelve centuries, until 1905, the Civil Service Examinations represented the ultimate goal toward which all formal education in traditional China was directed.<sup>1</sup>

The overwhelming majority of schools in traditional China were private, and were ordinarily supported by the tuition fees of the students, by individual families or clans, or even by village subscription. Students were generally taught by men who had won the first degree in the civil service examination called Hsiu-tsai and were always for the preparation for the examinations of a lower level. Their curricula were determined by the contents of the civil service examinations. These were composed of the Confucian classics and preparation for the examinations, of course, involved acquisition of a thorough knowledge of the classics and of the orthodox interpretation of them, as well as skill in the use of accepted forms of literary expression.

The official schools provided comparatively little actual instructions, especially during the Ch'ing dynasty. The government used them to examine people rather than to educate them. They were not usually places for teaching, but had a more limited and formal function as places for the official

registration or, sometimes, the supervision of scholars at different levels. Ju-hsueh (Confucian schools), the school for the first level of examinations, for example, offered no instruction. Government-appointed teachers with official rank were in charge of these schools and the students attended them only when the examining officer came to give examinations. Therefore, these kind of official schools were not places where teaching and learning took place in a general sense.

However, the shu-yuan (academies) which may be considered a third kind of "school", were neither purely private institutions only for the preparation for the lower level degrees, nor governmental agencies for examination. Before the Ch'ing dynasty, shu-yuan (academies) were predominantly private institutions of academic instruction and scholarly discussion independent of the government. During the Ch'ing, most of them were sponsored and subsidized by the government and were under the control of the local officials, but the personal initiative of officials or local gentry was still an important factor in their promotion and upkeep. Thus, the academies were private and official in varying degrees. Shu-yuan existed in all provincial capitals and in the important prefectural and district towns. They were often used to prepare candidates for the official examinations, but in many cases, the shu-yuan were centers of research and broad academic instruction. In general, they were responsible for

the high level of scholarship under the Ch'ing dynasty.<sup>2</sup>  
Several of the numerous learned publications of the Ch'ing  
period originated in the academies.<sup>3</sup>

### Women's Education in Traditional China

The schools and institutions mentioned above were actually established for men, because traditionally the authorities and the public at large were never concerned with women's literary education,<sup>4</sup> and because the social morals and customs were strongly opposed to girls going to school with boys. Women's formal education was completely neglected in traditional China, with the exception of some well-to-do families who might hire private tutors for their daughters' education, if they wished to let their daughters have some knowledge of literature. Generally speaking, traditional Chinese women were only occasionally and superficially taught anything beyond their household duties and the contents of women's education were predominately ethical teachings. For twenty-two centuries, many Confucian writers wrote scores of books on the position of women and their role in the family and society, and devised practical rules for their education and conduct. With only slight variations, all these books presented the same teachings. Obedience, timidity, reticence, adaptability were the main virtues of women. The three forms of dependence on man shaped a woman's

5  
life. The teaching consisted of such rules of conduct as: Outside affairs should not be talked of inside the threshold of the women's apartments; Women should not sit together with men or peep outside the walls or go to outer apartments. When going out they should cover their faces and look around with circumspection, etc..

### The Taiping Education System

The very limited evidence indicates that the most important distinguishing characteristic of the Taiping education was that it emphasized women's education as well as men's. They offered the same textbooks for the education of both boys and girls. The San-tzu-ching (The Trimetrical Classic), the Yu-chih ch'ien-tzu chao (The 1000-character Edict, compiled by the King), Yu-hsueh-shih (Ode for Youth) and T'ien-fu-shih (Poems by the Heavenly Father) were the main books for education, regardless of sex.

Besides the general teachings mentioned above, the teaching of religious ordinances, which also disregarded sex, was not neglected. "T'ien-chao t'ien-mou chih-tu" stated:

"...In every twenty-five families all children shall go to the chapel, where the platoon-chief shall preach and read Chiu-i chao sheng-shu (The Holy Book of the Old Testament), Hsin-i chao sheng-shu (The Holy Book of the New Testament) and Chen-ming chao-chi shu (The Book of True Decrees and Proclamations). Every sabbath the section-chief shall lead his men and women to the chapel, men on one side and women on the other, preaching and listening to sermons,

singing hymns and praying to the Heavenly Father, Supreme Lord and August God."7

Except for the small chapels which served as public classrooms, no public schools were found in T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo.<sup>8</sup> It is possible that the traditional private classes still existed in most areas of the Kingdom.

#### Women's Education in the Heavenly Kingdom of Peace

Lin-le said in his Ti-ping Tien-kwoh as follows:

"...Woman is by the Ti-pings recognized in her proper sphere as the companion of men; the education and development of her mind is equally well attended to; her duty to God is diligently taught and in ordinary worship she takes her proper place; many of the women are zealous and popular teachers and expounders of the Bible; in fact, everything is done to make her worthy of the improved position she has attained by reason of the Ti-ping movement."9

However, Lin-le's report seems to be over--enthusiastic. The Taiping women might have had more opportunities in education, as the evidence indicates, but they were not enhanced in every aspect. It was not that everything was done to make her worthy of the improved position she had attained by reason of the Ti-ping movement.

In the years around 1855, there were woman teachers in T'ien Wang's Palace. In other Wangs' palaces, a few woman officers were also in charge of teaching.<sup>10</sup>

Women's education was orientated in order to emphasize moral cultivation. As mentioned before, Yu-hsueh-

shih (Ode for Youth) defined ch'i-tao (the way of a wife) as based on the three forms of dependence and unquestioned obedience to her husband. It said:

"...should a hen desire to herald the arrival of the morning. It is one sure way of making the home miserable."<sup>11</sup>

One of the Hung Hsiu-ch'üan's the Poems by the Heavenly Father said:

"For goodness sake, a hen must not try to crow; It is provided by Heaven that a hen's crowing will be followed by execution."<sup>12</sup>

The Taiping women were taught not to interfere with the affairs of their husbands. One of the Poems by the Heavenly Father reads:

"Women in the rear palaces should not try to leave; If they should try to leave, it would be like hens trying to crow.  
The duty of the palace women is to attend to the needs of their husbands;  
And it is arranged by Heaven that they are not to learn of the affairs outside."<sup>13</sup>

The evidence obviously indicates that the moral education of the Taiping women was based on the traditional ideas. (e.g. The Taiping women were required to follow the traditional three forms of dependence and not to learn of the affairs outside.)

The Taiping women were usually in charge of the family education and paid especial attention to the religious teachings. Lin-le said:

"In every household throughout the length and

breadth of the Ti-ping territory the following translation of the Lords prayer is hung up for the use of children, being painted in large black characters on a white board... Frequently I have watched the Ti-ping women teaching this prayer to their little children. The board containing it being always the most prominent object in the principal apartment of their dwelling. Children have often run up to me on entering a house, and then pulling me towards the board, commenced reading the prayer."<sup>14</sup>

### Comparison and Summary

In comparison with the traditional education system, one can say that the basic ideas and contents for the Taiping women's education were adopted from Chinese tradition. But the Taiping education was made different from the traditional education by the following characteristics. 1) The Taiping Kingdom provided both the boys and girls with the same textbooks for their education. No books were written particularly for women's education. 2) They promoted religious education. The opportunity for men and women to go to church together and sit side by side to study the Taiping Bible, to sing hymns and pray to God, had never existed in the traditional education system. 3) In the Kingdom, women could be teachers. Therefore, the Taiping women had more opportunities for educational activities than the traditional women. The Taiping education system, to a certain extent, offered women a way to enhance their position.

## FOOTNOTES

1. The Civil Service Examination system will be discussed in Chapter IV.
2. Sheng Lang-hai, Chung-kuo shu-yuan chih-tu, Shanghai, 1934, pp. 131-214; Hsiao I-shan, Ch'ing-tai tung-shih, Shanghai, 1927-28, I. pp. 560-562.
3. For instance, the famous work written on the Confucian classics during the Ch'ing dynasty, Huang ch'ing ching-chieh, was edited in 1824-1829 by the Hsueh-hai T'ang Academy, established in 1820 in Canton by Juan Yuan, the governor general of Kwangtung and Kwangsi.
4. "Nü-tzu wu tsai pien shih te" (A woman without talents is virtuous) is a typical traditional idea. Ch'en Tung-yuan, p. 188.
5. One of these books is Lieh nü ch'uan (Series of Women's Biographies)--first arranged by Liu Hsiang in the 1st century A.D.. For summaries of these books see Ch'en Tung-yuan, 1935, p. 46, p. 113, and p. 178; also see Florence Ayscough, 1938, pp. 76-78.
6. For the detailed information about the traditional Chinese education system and the education of women in traditional China, see Ch'en Tung-yuan, Chung-kuo fu-nü sheng huo shih, 1935; Biggerstaff, Knight, The Earliest Modern Government Schools in China, 1961; Purcell Victor, Problems of Chinese Education, 1936; Chu, You-kwang, Some Problems of a National System of Education in China, 1933; Burton, Margaret E., The Education of Women in China, 1911, Kuo Ping-wen, The Chinese System of Public Education, 1915.
7. T'ien-ch'ao t'ien-mou chih-tu in Cheng J.C., Taiping Rebellion, 1855-1864, 1963, p. 41. There is no Taiping publication bearing the title "Chen-ming chao-chi shu". I feel tempted to identify it with "T'ien-ming chao-chi shu" (The Book of Heavenly Decrees and Proclamations, 1852). The characters could be easily misprinted.
8. The sources available about the Taiping education are extremely limited. It is impossible to make a complete report about the Taiping educational system. All one can do is to find some characteristics.



9. Lin-le, 1866, p. 302
10. Li Ch'un, 1963, p. 440.
11. Shih, 1967, p. 72, translated from "Yu-hsueh-shih" in Hsiao I-shan, T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo ts'ung-shu ts'e 4, 1934.
12. Ibid. from "T'ien-fu shih", No. 457 in Hsiao I-shan, 1934.
13. Ibid. "T'ien-fu shih", No. 458.
14. Lin-le, 1866, pp. 318-19.

## CHAPTER IV

## CIVIL EXAMINATION AND WOMEN OFFICERS

## The Traditional Civil Examination System

The civil examination system which had been practiced in China for two thousand years was an important device for the recruitment of bureaucracy in traditional China.

The civil examination of the Ch'ing dynasty included three main grades (or levels). The lowest level was Yuan-k'ao which was held twice in every three years in a prefectural capital; one who passed the Yuan-k'ao would be given the degree called Sheng-yuan (popularly called Hsiu-tsai). The second level, Hsiang-shih took place every three years in the capital of a province; one who succeeded in Hsiang-shih would obtain the degree called Chu-jen. The highest level was Hui-shih for the degree of Chin-shih. It was held every three years in the imperial capital.

In the Ch'ing dynasty, the so-called "mean people" class, which included slaves, servants, prostitutes, entertainers, etc., were prevented from taking the examinations. Confucian teachings were always the themes of the examinations.<sup>1</sup>

## The Taiping Civil Examination System

Like traditional China, Tai-p'ing t'ien-kuo also

had a civil service examination system. From 1853, the three main levels of local, provincial, and capital examinations for the degrees of hsiu-tsai, chu-jen and chin-shih were held once every year. After 1859, the names of the degrees were slightly changed. Hsiu-tsai was changed to hsiu-shih, chu-jen to po-shih (or yueh-shih) and chin-shih to ta-shih. Rather than receiving a degree, one who passed the examination was appointed to a certain official position, for example, one who was successful at the capital<sup>2</sup> (Chin-ling) examination was appointed as an army commander.

#### A Comparison between the Traditional and the Taiping Systems

The civil examination system of T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo was different from that of the Ch'ing Regime. First of all, the Taipings eliminated the discrimination against those traditionally regarded as "mean people"--servants, entertainers etc.. According to Chang Te-chien, any person of any family background or occupation could participate in the examinations. One who passed the examinations would be granted a proper title and treated equally to other successful candidates in spite of his previous background.<sup>3</sup> The examination themes were frequently taken from the Taiping Bible or concerned theological and state affairs. Confucian teachings had no place in the Taiping civil examinations.

## The Taiping Civil Examination for Women and its Importance

In 1853, after the T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo had offered the civil examinations for men, women were allowed to take the examinations. Hung Hsüan-chiao (T'ien Wang's sister) was appointed chief examiner, assisted by Chang Wan-ju and Wang Tzu-chen. The topic for this examination was "Wei nü-tzu yü hsiao-jen wei nai yang yeh" (Only Women and Small People Are Difficult to Get Along With). More than two hundred women came to take the examination. Fu Shan-hsiang, a girl from Chin-ling, Kiangsu province, obtained the highest mark. In her essay, she rejected the idea that they were difficult to get along with, by bringing in evidence that all the great women in Chinese history had contributed to the success of their husbands. Her essay met with great approval from T'ien Wang. She was dressed in an embroidered gown, crowned with laurel and sent parading with a band along the streets for three days. People called her Nü Chuang-yuan (woman number one in the capital examination). The second place went to Chung, and the third to Lin.<sup>4</sup> They were appointed as ministers<sup>5</sup> to serve in the kings' palaces.

The T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo did not offer a joint examination for men and women, perhaps because there were very few educated women at that time and it was difficult for them to compete with men. The examination for women took place

only once. The reason why the Taipings did not offer the women's civil examination again is unknown. Perhaps, the lack of well-educated women who were capable of taking the examination was the main reason.

Women were not allowed to take civil examinations in any other dynasties. The Taiping civil examination for women was a new development in Chinese history.

### The Taiping Organization of Women Officers

There were two kinds of women officers--court officials and field officers. The latter have been discussed in Chapter III. The court officials who served in the kings' palaces were usually of a higher rank than the field officers. The ranks and titles of the women are as follows:

#### Women Court Officials

##### First Rank

Women Chiefs of Staff	(4 in number)
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##### Second Rank

Women Ministers	(12 in number)
Honorary Women Ministers	(no definite number)

##### Third Rank

Women Censors	(36 in number)
Honorary Women Censors	(no definite number)
Lady keeper of the inner gate of the T'ien Wang's inner palace	( " )

Lady-in-waiting of the Tung Wang's palace (no definite number)

Lady-in-waiting of the Hsi Wang's palace ( " )

#### Fourth Rank

Women Directors (72 in number)

Women Directors of the Embroidery Quarters (240 in number)

Honorary Women Directors (no definite number)

Lady keeper of the inner gate of the Tung Wang's inner palace ( " )

Lady keeper of the inner gate of the Hsi Wang's inner palace ( " )

Lady-in-waiting of the Nan Wang's palace ( " )

Lady-in-waiting of the Pei Wang's palace ( " )

#### Fifth Rank

Women Generals (40 in number)

Women Generals of the Embroidery Quarters (200 in number)

Honorary Women Generals (no definite number)

Lady keeper of the inner gate of the Nan Wang's inner palace ( " )

Lady keeper of the inner gate of the Pei Wang's inner palace ( " )

Lady-in-waiting of the I Wang's palace ( " )

#### Sixth Rank

Women Corps Superintendents of the Embroidery Quarters (120 in number)

Lady keeper of the inner gate of  
the I Wang's inner palace (no definite number)

Lady-in-waiting of the Yen Wang's  
palace ( " )

#### Seventh Rank

Women Corps Inspectors of the  
Embroidery Quarters (no definite number)

Some of the ranks and titles mentioned above seem roughly parallel to those of the men's official system (e.g. ministers, censors). The women's official system was not an equivalent of the men's official system. For example, a female minister was neither necessarily equal to a male minister nor superior to a male censor. In comparison to those of the men officials, the position and roles of the women officials were vague. But compared with the women field officers, the position and living standard of the women court officials were usually superior.

The Kingdom selected talented women for its officialdom through the examination system. But this was not the main method of recruiting women officials. Most of the women officers were relatives of the kings or the first sisters who had joined the rebellion in Kwangsi without taking the civil examination.

In order to know what kind of people the women officers were, it is necessary to illustrate accounts with a few brief stories of some prominent women.

T'ien Wang's wife (the Queen) was from a family

named Lai of Chia-ying-chou in Kwangtung province. Her father was a scholar. His study of the Ming history inspired him to revive the Ming dynasty. At that time, many ambitious loyalists in Kwangtung and Kwangsi had associated themselves with secret societies and found refuge in lowly occupations. The Lai family befriended these people and gave them financial help whenever they were in need. When Hung (T'ien Wang) was in financial difficulties, Lai (the Queen) sold her jewellery to help him. In the breaking of the siege of Yung-an, Lai, sword in hand, led women soldiers on horseback to the battle<sup>10</sup> to fight against the Manchu troops.

Hung Hsüan-chiao (T'ien Wang's sister) organized women into army corps and made herself their commander in Chin-tien at the beginning of the rebellion. When Ch'ao-kuei (her husband, Hsi Wang) went to battle, Hsüan-chiao would lead the troops of women to help him. They were dead shots with firearms. The morale of the Manchu troops was often broken by their presence. In the battle of Ch'ang-sha, when her husband was killed, she, wearing mourning, assumed the command of the troops and kept them from dispersing. In 1853, she was in charge of the establishment of the women's quarters in Chin-ling. Afterwards, she was shocked and disappointed by the internal strife of 1856, and retired, never again to take<sup>11</sup> care of the affairs of the Kingdom.

Hsiao San-niang (Hsi Wang's younger sister) was



known as the "woman commander". She was a great general on horseback, and could shoot an arrow with either hand. When the Taipings captured Chen-chiang, she led several hundred women soldiers and scaled the city walls.<sup>12</sup>

Yang Erh-ku possessed great courage and decisiveness not to be found even among men. Her husband was a director of the army, and she usually went to battle with him. She was skillful at throwing knives from horseback and the enemies struck by them were invariably killed. She always carried a set of knives into battle and called herself the "divine knife-thrower".<sup>13</sup>

Fu Shan-hsiang, who had taken the first place in the women's civil examination, was one of the most prominent women officials. She was made Chung-t'uan t'uan-shuai (an officer commanding twenty thousand women) by Tung Wang and also given the privilege of reporting directly to him. She became a Honorary Woman Minister and served in Tung Wang's palace.<sup>14</sup>

#### Reasons for the Establishment of the Women's Civil Examination and the Women's Official System

First, the Taiping social ideals were based upon the brotherhood of men. This idea might have been derived from their religious doctrine that God was the universal Father and all men were His children. The Taipings believed that their bodies were born of their parents, but their souls

were born of God so that all men in the world were brothers and all women, sisters. Social equality was thus theoretically implied. The establishment of women's civil examinations and the women's official system seems to be a corollary of their social and religious ideals of brotherhood and equality.

Second, since the beginning of the rebellion, women and men had been working and fighting side by side. The Taiping women had proved that they were capable of handling public affairs as well as men. The capability and customs of the Hakka women (the majority of women officialdom) will be discussed in Chapter VI. Some Yao people (a minor race stock in the Southwest China) joined the Taiping rebellion.<sup>15</sup> The Yao women were used to assuming military affairs.

Third, the Taipings offered the civil examination for women in order to select talented and capable women and appoint them as officers, because they needed women's help. For example, the Taiping kings appointed women as civil officials in their palaces, and no evidence indicates that there were eunuchs in the palaces.

In brief, the initiation of the women's civil examinations and the women's official system were contributed to by their ideas of equality, the Taiping women's capability of handling public affairs, and the necessity of women's help.

## The Importance of the Taiping Organization of Women Officers in Chinese History

Unlike its women's civil examinations, the Taiping women's official system was not unique in Chinese history. For example, in a classic work--Chou-li--the appointment of women officials in the palace was suggested. However, women were not appointed as officials until the 1st century A.D. during the Han dynasty. At that time, the emperor, Han Ming Ti, appointed six women secretaries. In the Ming dynasty, there were also women civil officers. It is possible that during the Ch'ing period, some female<sup>16</sup> relatives of the royal family served in the palace.

But the specific roles and duties of these women officers are unknown. They remain as a puzzle in Chinese history. On the other hand, T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo had a complicated women's official system and many women officers, as mentioned before. This was one of the features of the Kingdom which no other regime in Chinese history could match.

## FOOTNOTES

1. For details concerning the traditional civil examination system, see Lo Korch Huang, The Civil Service System of China, 1961. Teng Ssu-yu, Chung-kuo k'ao-shih chih-tu shih, 1966; Franke, Wolfgang, The Reform and Abolition of the Traditional Chinese Examination System, 1960; and Menzel, J.M., The Chinese Civil Service, 1963. This thesis will not attempt to elaborate on the subject.
2. cf. P'eng Tse-i, T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo ko-ming ssu-ch'ao, 1946, pp. 30-31.
3. cf. Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan in Hsiang Ta, 1952, Vol. 3, pp. 111-115.
4. Ling Shan-ch'ing, 1923, Chuan 8, p. 5.
5. Jen, 1958, p. 1230; Lo Erh-kang, 1955, p. 324.  
To what offices in the palaces they were appointed, as well as how many women passed the examination and were appointed as officials are unknown.
6. cf. Jen, 1958, p. 1231, and Li Chün, 1963, p. 481.
7. According to Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan, there were 300 "Lady Keepers of the inner gate of the palaces" and 280 "Ladies-in-waiting of the palaces". The total number of women court officials was 1464 (excluding Honorary Women Ministers, because there is no definite number for them.)  
The male court officials were numerous. In addition to kings, there were marquises, ministers, censors, directors, aide-de-camps, generals and many officials of lower rank. Generally speaking, most of the ranks did not have a definite number of members, therefore the total remains unknown. However, according to Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan, it is possible that the Kingdom had more than forty thousand male court officials. Therefore, the number of female court officials was roughly one-fortieth of that of the men. (cf. Chang, Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan in Hsiang Ta, 1952, Vol. 3, pp. 77-115, and pp. 281-310.)
8. Jen, 1958, pp. 1232-35.  
Because of the lack of evidence, the duties and roles of the women officials, and their relations to men in job and in authority are not known. However, Fu Shan-hsiang an Honorary Woman Minister, for example, might have been

doing a kind of secretarial work for Tung Wang and might have led women troops in case of fighting. (cf. Ling Shan-ch'ing, 1923, Chuan 18)

9. cf. Chang, Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan, Chuan 12 in Hsiang Ta 1952, Vol. 3, and Jen, 1958, p. 1234.
10. Ling Shan-ch'ing, 1923, Chuan 1, p. 16.
11. Ibid. Chuan 18.
12. Ibid. Chuan 20.
13. Ibid. Chuan 20.
14. Ibid. Chuan 18.
15. Yao women who assumed military command had the right to put on jade headdresses and purple phoenix fur coats draped in butterfly patterned silk and to carry seals of rhinoceros tusk. When seen from afar, they resembled deities. The jade headdress is a piece of soft jade on which are carved two phoenix heads around which the hairs are wound. (Hsun-chou fu-chih, 1896, Chuan 54: 9 in Shih, 1967, p. 318) The ratio of Yao people to the total number of people in the rebellion is unknown.
16. cf. Jen, 1958, p. 1235.

## CHAPTER V

THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY AND THE PROHIBITION OF  
ADULTERY AND PROSTITUTION

## Slavery in Traditional China

One of the most prominent features of a traditional, wealthy Chinese household was the number of servants. Many of these servants were hired, but a large portion were nu (slaves), usually young girls of ten to eighteen years old, who had been sold by their parents, because their families were too poor to support them.

Slaves were considered property and were ruled by the whim of their masters. A slave's marriage was arranged by his master. Sometimes a female slave was manumitted and sent out of the household to marry a non-slave, but more usually she was given by her master to one of his male slaves. The children of slaves inherited the slave status from their parents and were owned by the family of the master. Slaves and their children could only be set free by their masters. According to Ta-ch'ing lü-li (the Penal Code of the Ch'ing dynasty), male slaves who ran away from their masters were given forty strokes and tattooed on the face while the female slaves were given eighty strokes.

The inequalities between masters and slaves can be illustrated by examples of the traditional laws. A master

had the right to beat his slaves and was not responsible for any injury that might occur. No penalty was exacted for injuring a slave under T'ang, Sung, Ming or Ch'ing laws. And it was clearly stated in a note to the Ch'ing law, that since the law required no punishment for injuring a slave, a master was not held responsible, if his slave died accidentally while being lawfully punished. The law prohibited only punishment in an inhuman manner and killing with intent. In Ming and Ch'ing times, the punishment for a master who, instead of remitting a guilty slave to the authorities, killed him intentionally on his own authority, was one hundred strokes. A master, who killed a slave who was not guilty, was given sixty strokes and a year's imprisonment, the family members of the murdered slave all being freed and becoming commoners.

On the other hand, slaves were expected to behave towards their masters respectfully--any insult or violent action was a serious offence. In the Ming and Ch'ing laws a slave who accused his master was punished with one hundred strokes and three year's imprisonment, if the accusation proved true; and by strangling, if the accusation proved false. On the other hand, if a master thought that a slave was guilty of some crime, he was entitled to charge him with it, and was not punished even if the accusation proved false. A slave, guilty of scolding his master, was strangled, and

one guilty of striking his master, whether injury resulted or not, was beheaded. A slave whose act caused the death of his master, regardless of whether it involved simple fighting, killing with intent or premeditated murder, was to be dismembered; if the master was killed accidentally, the slave was subject to detention in prison to be strangled.

Slaves did not receive the same treatment as commoners before the law either. Under the Ming and the Ch'ing laws, a slave who struck a freeman was punished more severely than in ordinary cases involving two freemen; while the punishment for a freeman who beat and injured a slave was less severe. Thus, it can be seen that the position of slaves left them powerless to defend themselves against cruelly disposed masters. The Manchu authorities offered little protection for slaves.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Taiping Policy on the Abolition of Slavery

Unlike the previous dynasties which had legalized slavery, the Taiping Kingdom attempted to eliminate it. The Taiping policy to abolish slavery was found in Hung Jen-kan's "Tzu-cheng hsin-pien" (The New Draft of the Heavenly Administration) which was in the form of a memorial to T'ien Wang (Hung Hsiu-ch'üan) and issued by him in 1859. "The New Draft of the Heavenly Administration" stated:

"...Among foreign nations there is a law prohibiting the sale of children as slaves. Those who sell their



children because of poverty only do so out of necessity and do not reflect that their offspring are to be forever slaves of others. This is exceedingly disgraceful to the ancestors. Perhaps their posterity may produce virtuous and clever individuals, who will, as slaves, not only be unable to serve that state, but may also bring harm to the state. Thus the rich shall be allowed to employ people as labourers, but not to purchase slaves which make us the object of scorn of foreign states. If daughters are too difficult to maintain, they shall be permitted to be employed as Nü-tzu [waitresses]...."2

The quotation above shows us that Hung Jen Kan's desire for westernization was responsible for the abolition of slavery. In order to understand why he advocated these western ideas, it is necessary to review a part of his experiences.

Hung Jen-kan was T'ien Wang's cousin and close companion. When T'ien Wang began to preach the Christian doctrine in 1843, Hung Jen-kan and Feng Yun-shan were the first two converts. Hung Jen-kan had been in Canton with Hung Hsiu-ch'üan to study the Bible under the missionary Reverend I. J. Roberts in 1847.<sup>3</sup> When the Rebellion started in Chin-t'ien in 1850, he did not have the chance to join the uprising. In 1853, he went to Hong Kong to study biblical works under Theodore Hamberg, a Swedish missionary, after which, he became a preacher of the London Missionary Society. Shortly after Hung Jen-kan arrived in Chin-ling in 1859, T'ien Wang appointed him prime minister and conferred the title of Kan Wang on him.

When Hung Jen-kan was in Hong Kong, he had been in close association with the Western missionaries and Western ideas. His "The New Draft of the Heavenly Administration" was an outline of his program in which he showed his understanding of the West and his desire to bring China abreast of the West in the material aspect of civilization. The main ideas of his program were local self-government, respect for public opinion, establishment of a monetary and banking system, encouragement of private invention through patent protection and monopoly rights, an over-all plan for land and water communication and for a postal system, improvement of the judiciary system and the abolition of slavery, etc..<sup>4</sup> All these reforms that he wanted to introduce were derived from his missionary background and his view of the West. Therefore, the abolition of slavery as one item of his program, was probably based on the Christian idea of equality as well as his desire for westernization.

As to how far the abolition of slavery was carried out, Lin-le in his Ti-ping T'ien-kwoh stated:

"The detestable system of slavery is totally abolished by the Taipings, and the abolition made effective by punishment with decapitation upon the slightest infringement of the law by male or female. The law as far as the slavery of men was concerned had no great occasion for existence, such cases being uncommon in China; but the real necessity for such an important innovation consisted in the fact that every woman was more or less a slave."<sup>5</sup>

Besides Christian and Western influence, the abolition of slavery may be attributed to one of the local Hakka customs, according to which Hakka girls were rarely sold as slaves.

#### Adultery and Prostitution in Traditional China

The prohibition of adultery in traditional Chinese society seemed to be a restriction for women rather than for men. A married man as well as a single man, usually had the privilege of sexual intercourse with women who were neither members of his patri-lineage nor wives of his blood relatives. For example, the Ming and the Ch'ing laws provided no punishment for a master who had illicit intercourse with his slaves or servants. On the other hand, women had never had such a privilege. A man could kill his unfaithful wife and her paramour and go unpunished. A wife or daughter of a master, who was guilty of having illicit intercourse with a slave or a servant of the family, was always punished by death.<sup>7</sup> A woman who lost her chastity was considered an utter disgrace to her family and was discriminated against by society. Under such circumstances, the only honourable recourse for the woman was to commit suicide. Society greatly praised a woman who died in defending her chastity.

The practice of prostitution had long been recognized by laws and accepted by society. In the Ming dynasty,

for example, it was an accepted practice for a woman to become a prostitute as a form of punishment.<sup>8</sup> There were many romantic stories about relationships between the literati and prostitutes in Chinese history. People in general did not think that these stories were degrading to the literati. Although prostitution was considered a disgraceful occupation, a woman, forced by extreme economic difficulties or some other reasons (e.g. loss of chastity), could become a prostitute.

During the Ch'ing dynasty, houses of prostitution existed throughout the country. Before the Taipings' arrival, Chin-ling was the paradise of prostitutes. The Manchu authorities just ignored them.<sup>9</sup> The traditional-minded women took it for granted that men might have extra-marital privileges, and society tended to keep silent, if a man's wife did not complain about his behavior.

#### The Taiping Policy on the Prohibition of Adultery and Prostitution

As for the prohibition of adultery and prostitution among the Taipings, we had better review their discipline and the history of their movement. That one should not commit adultery was one of their most important doctrines. As early as 1845, Hung Hsiu-ch'uan (T'ien Wang) stated in his essay called "Yüan-tao chiu shih ko" (The Proclamation on

the Origin of the Principles of World Salvation):

"Adultery is the worst of all evil deeds.  
What God hates most is that men become devils  
because of committed adultery."<sup>10</sup>

The Taipings laid emphasis on the prohibition of adultery at the very outset of their campaign at Yung-an in 1852. At that time, Hung Hsiu-ch'uan gave out the following edict:

"...the male and the female soldiers and officers in the whole army should obey the Heavenly commandments...all the commanders in the various army corps should from time to time make close inspections for the purpose of discovering any violations of the seventh heavenly commandment (Thou shalt not commit adultery.). Should there be any violations of this commandment, they should be executed immediately after their crime is discovered and there should be no pardon. Let no soldier or officer try to protect the criminals, for in doing so they are sure to offend the Heavenly Father, the Huang Shang-ti and incur his righteous indignation."<sup>11</sup>

One of T'ien Wang's T'ien-fu shih (poems of the Heavenly Father) read:

"No evil is unpardonable except the violation of the seventh commandment, for this is an evil of the most dreadful sort."<sup>12</sup>

As discussed before in Chapter II, the segregation of the sexes was one of the distinguished features of the Taiping society, and the prohibition of adultery and prostitution was one of their most serious doctrines. According to their military laws, those who were guilty of rape were beheaded, and those who committed adultery with consent,

even if they were husband and wife, were executed.<sup>13</sup> There is plenty of evidence which indicates how strictly they enforced this doctrine. For example, Hsieh San, a Taiping soldier, was killed for adultery.<sup>14</sup> When the Taiping army arrived in Wu-han in 1852, some Taiping soldiers, who broke into the women's quarter and tried to have intercourse with women, were executed immediately.<sup>15</sup> And in 1854, Ch'en Tsung-yang, the Deputy minister of the Winter Department, was executed for staying with his wife overnight.<sup>16</sup>

Chang Ju-nan recorded in his Chin-ling sheng-nan chi-lüeh that after the Taipings arrived in Chin-ing, they still strictly observed the seventh Heavenly Commandment; even the old Brothers, who came from Kwangsi, dared not violate this rule, otherwise they would be killed.<sup>17</sup>

According to the Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan, when their army marched to Hupei in 1854, two of the Taiping army commanders--Wei Chün and Shih Feng-k'uei--warned the people to turn away from old "degenerate customs" and return to Cheng-tao (the right principle). One of the commands said:

"Prostitution should by all means be prohibited. Men have men's quarters to go to and women have theirs;...Should any one indulge in immoral conduct, or should any officers, soldiers or common people secretly go to sleep in houses of prostitution and violate the regulation, they shall be punished. Those who run houses of prostitution shall be summarily executed along with their entire families; and their neighbors who arrest them and hand them over to the government shall be rewarded, while those who let them go shall be punished.

Those who know the regulation but intentionally violate this shall be executed."<sup>18</sup>

Lin-le, as well as Chinese writers, reported that prostitution was prohibited and anyone who committed adultery or practiced prostitution would be put to death.<sup>19</sup>

The Taipings prohibited adultery and prostitution mainly because of their religious doctrine, and possibly because they accepted and emphasized the Chinese traditional saying--Wan o yin wei shou (Adultery is the greatest of all evil deeds)--as well as the Seventh Commandment in the Old Testament.

#### The Significance of the Taiping Policies Towards Slavery, Adultery, and Prostitution

Compared with the other Chinese dynasties, the Taiping authorities took the prohibition of adultery and prostitution more seriously. They did not provide men with any legal extra-marital privileges. Moreover, the prohibition of prostitution was a new development in Chinese history. The prohibition of adultery and prostitution, as well as the abolition of slavery, were beneficial to women and undoubtedly helped to improve their status.

## FOOTNOTES

1. cf. Ch'u T'ung-tsu, Law and Society in Traditional China, 1961. Chapter III, Social Classes, pp. 128-207.
2. "The New Draft of the Heavenly Administration" in Cheng J. C., Taiping Rebellion 1850-1864, 1963, pp. 56-59. Peng Tse-i, T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo ko-ming ssu-ch'ao, 1946, p.34.
3. Teng Ssu-yü, New Light on the History of the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion, 1950, p. 56.
4. cf. P'eng Tse-i, 1946, pp. 33-41; Shih Y.C., 1967, pp. 138-139.
5. Lin-le, 1866, p. 303.
6. cf. Hsieh T'ing-yü "Origin and Migration of the Hakkas" in Chinese Social and Political Science Review, Vol. XIII, No. 2, April 1929, p. 205.
7. Chü T'ung-tsu, 1961, p. 110 and pp. 198-200.
8. Ch'en Tung-yuan, Chung-kuo fu-nü sheng huo shih, 1935, p.202.
9. Ibid. p. 292.
10. "Yüan-tao chiu shih ko" in Jen, T'ai-p'ing chu Kwangsi sou I shih, 1946, pp. 116-118.  
"Yüan-tao chiu shih ko" was written by Hung Hsiu-chüan in 1845 (46?).
11. T'ien-ming chao-chih shu (Book of Heavenly Decrees and Proclamations) in Hsiang Ta, 1952, Vol. I, p. 68.  
T'ien-ming chao-chih shu, published in 1852, includes some of T'ien Wang's (the Heavenly King) decrees and proclamations from 1849 to 1852.
12. T'ien-fu shih, No. 465 in Hsiao, Ts'ung-shu, Vol. 2, p. 857.
13. Chang, Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan, Chuan 8, in Hsiang Ta, Vol. 3, 1952, pp. 227-232.
14. T'ien-ch'ing tao-li shu (Book on the Principles of the Heavenly Nature) in Hsiang Ta, Vol. I, pp. 388-389.  
T'ien-ch'ing tao-li shu which was written by one of Tung Wang's (the Eastern King) subordinates (his name is unknown) under the former's order and published in 1854,



records the history of the Rebellion and some of Tung Wang's poems.

15. Ch'en Hui-yun, Wu-ch'ang chih-shih in Jen, 1958, p. 1206.
16. Chang, Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan, Chuan 2 and Chuan 12, in Hsiang Ta, Vol. 3, 1952, p. 72 and p. 313.
17. Chin-ling sheng-nan chi-lt'eh in Jen, 1958, p. 1206.
18. Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan in Hsiang Ta, 1952, Vol. 3, pp. 224-225.
19. Lin-le, 1866, p. 302, and pp. 317-318.

## CHAPTER VI

## SOCIAL CUSTOMS AND PERSONAL ADORNMENTS

## Foot-binding and Infanticide in Traditional China

The custom of foot-binding was centuries old in China. Its origin can be traced back to the tenth century A.D.<sup>1</sup> The custom was still practiced universally in the Ch'ing period, with a few exceptions, such as the Hakkas, the Manchu women, the non-Chinese natives, and the women from poor families who had to work hard to earn their living. The "San ts'un chin lien" (three inch golden lilies, the bound feet of Chinese women) seemed to be not only a symbol of beauty, but also a mark of the leisure class. A woman of a poor family could not afford the practice of foot-binding. A woman without "golden lilies" would have had difficulty in finding a husband of good family background. Although the Manchu Emperor, K'ang-hsi (1662-1722), had issued a decree prohibiting the practice of foot-binding, he rescinded it later because of the strong opposition of the people.

Infanticide (usually of a baby girl) was another centuries old custom. It is possible that it had been practiced since the Han dynasty.<sup>2</sup> Infanticide was prevalent in poor districts (e.g. the villages of Fukien province), where the poor families, especially those already over-

burdened with daughters, might sell and give their girls away if possible. Otherwise the baby girls might be drowned, smothered or abandoned in the fields. Boys were seldom the victims of infanticide, because sons were universally regarded as necessary for the support of their parents, the comfort in their old age, and the repose of their souls after death, so that they were treasured and valued as one of Heaven's best gifts; on the other hand, daughters were considered unprofitable servants and burdens, which could only be disposed of by incurring the expenses of marriage.<sup>3</sup>

In traditional Chinese society, children were more or less regarded by their parents as their personal properties. Therefore, parents usually would deal with them in any way they wanted. The prevalence of infanticide indicates that the power which parents had over their children, was practically unlimited in the Ch'ing dynasty. The only check upon their complete authority was the law. Under the Penal Code of the Ch'ing dynasty (Ta-ch'ing lü-li), neither the parents nor grandparents were held guilty when the beating of a disobedient child or grandchild caused his unexpected death; only when the child was killed inhumanely were they punished by one hundred strokes. If they killed a blameless child with intent, they were punished by sixty strokes and one year's imprisonment. The punishment for the premeditated murder of a child was the same as that for killing a blameless child with intent. In-

fanticide, which was not mentioned in the Penal Code of the Ch'ing dynasty, might have been regarded as the premeditated murder of a child. However, the prevalence of infanticide at that time suggests that the Ch'ing authorities did not strictly enforce the punishment for infanticide.<sup>5</sup>

#### The Prohibitions of Foot-binding and Infanticide in the Taiping Kingdom

When the Taipings arrived in Chin-ling in 1853, all women were prohibited from practicing foot-binding. The violaters were to be executed. Even those whose feet were already bound were ordered to unbind them.<sup>6</sup>

Lin-le said in his Ti-ping T'ien-kwoh:

"The Ti-pings have abolished the horrible customs of cramping and deforming the feet of their women. But although under their improved system, no female child is so tortured, many of their wives have the frightful "small feet", having with the exception of the natives of Kwangsi, some parts of Kwangtung, and the Miau-tzu, originally conformed to the crippling custom. All children born since the earliest commencement of the Ti-ping rebellion have the natural foot. This great benefit to the women, their consequent improved appearance, and the release of the men from the tail-wearing shaven-headed badge of former slavery, form the two most conspicuous of their distinguishing habits, and cause the greatest difference and improvement in the personal appearance of the Ti-pings as compared with that of their Tartar-governed countrymen. The much higher social position of the Ti-ping ladies over that of their unfortunate sisters included within the Manchoo domestic regime, has long been one of the brightest ornaments of their government. ...The greatest physical comfort to the women is their enjoyment of natural feet and the ability to move about as they wish; though, unfortunately, it

is only amongst the youngest that this prevails entirely..."?

Infanticide was not prohibited until 1859, when Kan Wang suggested it in his "The New Draft of the Heavenly Administration":

"...with reference to the prohibition of drowning one's own son or daughter, if a man is unable to feed his child, a childless person shall be allowed to adopt the child as his own, not as his slave. Perhaps the child may be handed over to the foundling hospitals. Any person who drowns his child shall be punished."<sup>8</sup>

Except for Lin-le's report about foot-binding, there is no other evidence which indicates how far and to what extent the prohibitions of foot-binding and infanticide were carried out. However, the emergence of these ideas in China in the 19th century can not be overlooked.

#### The Carrying out of Men's Work by the Taiping Women

The Taiping women did much work which was usually assigned to men, such as carrying rice, coal, bricks and soil, digging ditches, trenches in warfare, and harvesting,  
<sup>9</sup>  
 etc..

Hsieh chieh-ho, a pro-Manchu commoner in his Chin-ling kuei-chia chi-shih lüeh reported what he had seen in Chin-ling in 1853 as follows:

"When the great camp of the Eastern Gate was formed (the Manchu army pitched camps there), the Taipings were afraid and sent out twenty thousand women every day to dig ditches. ...The wheat outside the Eastern Gate had already ripened and had stood for a long time

unharvested; they therefore sent women out to harvest it."<sup>10</sup>

Wang Shih-to, a commoner, was also an observer in Chin-ling at that time. In Wang's I-ping jih-chi, he commented on women's work:

"The Taipings came originally from the mountainous regions and their womenfolk were used to farming, weaving, dying and so forth. They did not realize that the women of Chin-ling were not used to doing work like this. Thinking that whatever they (the Hakka women) could do the others could do too, they ordered them (the women of Chin-ling) to do their own share of the work in carrying rice, pounding grain, felling bamboo, digging ditches, carrying bricks, harvesting wheat and grain, carrying salt and water etc.. Since their bound feet made working hard for the Chin-ling women, they were ordered to loosen the bindings on their feet. They did not realize that the feet would not grow and recover any more, once they had been bound. However, only the Kiangsu women suffered from this; the women from Anhwei took it as a matter of course and did not feel strange about it."<sup>11</sup>

The Kiangsu women suffered more from the work mentioned by Wang Shih-to because they practiced foot-binding, came from cities, and were not used to doing that kind of work, whereas most of the Anhwei women in Chin-ling came from Anhwei villages or rural areas, did not practice foot-binding, and were accustomed to hard work.

#### The Dress and Ornament of Traditional Chinese Women

In the Ch'ing dynasty, the dresses of the wives of mandarins were of good quality, made of rich silks, splendidly coloured and brightly embroidered. In style, generally speaking,

there was no difference between the dresses of a mandarin's wife and that of a commoner's wife. The dresses usually consisted of a loose tunic reaching to the knees, which buttoned at the neck and under the right arm. A pair of trousers drawn in at the ankles completed the attire on ordinary occasions, but on special days (e.g. festivals) an embroidered petticoat, which hung square both in front and in-back, was also worn. The hair was always carefully styled and gaily adorned, but in ways and fashions which differed in every part of China. Flowers, both natural and artificial, were commonly used as ornaments on the head, and richly engraved and jewelled hairpins were added to give taste to the coiffure. Dress and ornament were important as indications of status. The wives or daughters of the common people could wear only one gold hair ornament and one pair of gold earrings; other ornaments had to be of silver or chrysoprase, nor were the common people allowed to wear hats with large tasselled knots. Slaves, servants and actors were not permitted to wear stone-blue.

#### The Taiping Women's Personal Adornments

The dresses of the Taiping women were similar to those of other Chinese women. The Taiping women's dresses were in the Chinese style, but with Hakka local and rural variations. The miscellaneous and limited evidence available

may give some ideas of how the Taiping women dressed themselves.

When the Taiping women's troops fought against the governmental army in Yung-an in 1852, they wore turbans wrapped around their heads. Later on, in the battlefield of Wu-ch'ang, they wore red silk headdresses and grass sandals.<sup>13</sup>

Chin-ho, an observer in Chin-ling, described the Taiping women as following:

"What do the female rebels look like? They dress in a fashion similar to that of the male rebels--consisting of a dress with narrow cuffs, a short coat, a yellow turban on the head, a long sword hanging at the waist and barefooted--and they are very skillful riders."<sup>14</sup>

The yellow colour was reserved for the women and the men officers, but red might be used by soldiers and common people. The women Chin-ho described were probably women officers, as they wore yellow turbans.<sup>15</sup> It is more likely that they were wearing sandals, commonly worn by the peasants of Kwangsi and Kwangtung and seldom seen by Kiangsu people, than that they were barefooted. This latter observation is probably a result of the Chin-ho's prejudice.<sup>16</sup> Besides Chin-ho, the foreign observers (e.g. Wolseley) also reported that the Taiping women rode horses and appeared in public places as a part of normal behaviour.<sup>17</sup>

The illustrations in Lin-le's Ti-ping T'ien-kwoh shows us how the Taiping women dressed themselves. The Chinese dress which Lin-le's fiance, Marie, put on may be a



good model. He described the dress as follows:

"...a style of costume excessively becoming, consisting of loose petticoat trousers and a nicely cut over-garment reaching just below the knees, tight at the neck half tight at the waist, with loose sleeves and a loose embroidered skirt, open at the sides."<sup>18</sup>

#### The Sources of the Taiping Social Customs and Personal Adornments

The Taiping social customs and the women's personal adornments may be traced back to Hakka local customs and Christian influence.

Foot-binding was not common among the Hakka women. The land which the Hakkas (the guest people, the late immigrants and the minority in the South China) settled was usually not very fertile, often making it necessary for the Hakka men to leave their hometown or to emigrate somewhere else (e.g. Southeast Asia) in order to make enough money to support their families. Thus, all kinds of work was left to their women, so that besides doing housework and making clothes, the Hakka women became used to working in the fields, herding cattle, tilling land, gathering fuel wood and carrying loads. In the Hakka districts, mistresses of the gentry or well-to-do families usually worked as hard as concubines and maids. In general, the dresses of the Hakka women were crude and their ornaments, simple. When they worked in the fields, they knotted their hair, wore turbans and belts, and dressed

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in short jackets.

Even in the 19th century, it was common for the Hakka women to go to the market town from different villages to sell their farm produce and to purchase what they wanted. The Hakka women seemed to be the hardest workers and the most capable women in China.

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The Kwangsi and the Kwangtung women were different from the Kiangsu and the Chekiang women, because the former were not only housekeepers, but also involved in other productive activities. The tilling of the land was often regarded as the main occupation of the women. If there was not enough land for them to till, they would go into the small towns in order to look for other kinds of jobs. Both tilling the land and hunting for jobs outside their own home-town were unusual events for the Kiangsu and the Chekiang women.

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Infanticide, which was prevalent in Southern China, was also practiced by the Hakkas. The prohibition of infanticide, as well as the opposition to the wearing ornaments, was suggested by Kan Wang, a Christian preacher. Therefore, it is possible to attribute them to the influence of Christianity and Kan Wangs' personal opinions. How far and to what extent these two policies were carried out remains unknown.

From the accounts given above, it can be seen that there are similarities between the Taiping social customs (and policies) and the Hakka customs. For example, the Tai-

pings did not allow the women to practice foot-binding, and the Hakka women simply did not have the custom. Harvesting grain and carrying heavy loads, which the women were required to do, were the ordinary work of the Hakka women. The Taiping women generally wore turbans and belts, which were the Hakka women's common adornments. The main reason for these similarities seems to be very plain, the Taiping leaders and their basic members were Hakkas; thus it is likely that they would continue to practice their own customs and would be inclined to require all people under their control to conform to their ways.

It is safe to say that the Hakka local customs were the main sources of the Taiping social customs and the Taiping women's personal adornments. The Taiping social customs were merely local individual variations of Chinese customs rather than revolutionary divergences from the Chinese traditional customs.

## FOOTNOTES

1. cf. Ch'en Tung-yuan, 1935, p. 125, p. 232, and Mou An-shih, 1961, p. 169.
2. Ch'en Tung-yuan, 1935, p. 61.
3. cf. Chapter I, Marriage and the Family.
4. Ch'u Tung-tsu, 1961, pp. 23-24 and p. 42.
5. For information concerning the extent of infanticide in China, see Ho Ping-ti, 1959, pp. 58-62.
6. cf. Chang, Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan in Hsiang Ta, 1952, Vol. 3, p. 316; Lo Erh-kang, 1955, p. 92; Lo Erh-kang, 1950, p. 42; Mou An-shih, 1961, p. 169.
7. Lin-le, 1866, p. 301 and p. 303.
8. Cheng J.C., 1963, p. 56; P'eng Tse-i, 1946, p. 37; Mou An-shih, 1961, p. 257.
9. Chang, Tse-ch'eng hui-tsuan in Hsiang Ta, 1952, Vol. 3, p. 111; Lo Erh-kang, T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo shih-shih k'ao, 1955, pp. 325-326.
10. Shih Y.C., 1967, p. 65; Lo E. K., 1955, p. 326.
11. I-ping jih-chih, Chuan 3. in Shih Y.C., 1967, p. 65; Jen, 1958, p. 1225.
12. Ch'u Tung-tsu, 1961, pp. 137-141.
13. Tse-ch'ing hui-tsuan in Hsiang Ta, 1952, Vol. 3, p. 111; Ch'en hui-yen, Wu-ch'ang chi-shih in Jen, 1958, p. 1213.
14. Lo Erh-kang, 1955, pp. 338-339.
15. Lo Erh-kang, 1951, p. 184.
16. Jen, 1958, p. 1237.
17. cf. Jen, 1958, pp. 1194-95; Lo Erh-kang, 1950, pp. 50-51.
18. Lin-le, 1866, p. 239.
19. cf. Wu Tsung-cho, Wen Chung-ho et al. (editors) Chia-ying

chou-chih, 1898, Chuan 8, pp. 53-55.

20. cf. Lo Hsiang-lin, K'o-chia yen-chiu t'ao-lun, 1933;  
Lechler "The Hakka Chinese" Chinese Recorder, 1878,  
Vol. IX, No. 5, pp. 358-59 in Shih Y.C., 1967, p. 310;  
Hsieh Ting-yu "Origin and Migrations of the Hakka" in  
The Chinese Social and Political Science Review,  
Vol., XIII, pp. 203-205.
21. cf. Kuo Chen-i, Chung-kuo fu-nü wen-ti, 1937, pp. 147-  
148.

## CHAPTER VII

## CONCLUSION

The cultural diversity of T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo is apparent in its institutions for women, which were formed under the influences of four main elements--Chinese tradition, the particular local customs of the Hakka, Christianity, and the need for women's help in public affairs.

The practice of polygyny, the status of women in the family and the contents of women's education are due to the influence of Chinese tradition. Hakka local customs are the source of the prohibition of foot-binding. The influence of Christianity is responsible for the promotion of monogamy, the abolition of slavery and the prohibition of adultery and prostitution. The establishment of women's quarters, the civil examinations for women, and the women's official system are chiefly due to the need for women's help--the duties of the women's quarters were subordinate work connected with fighting (and fighting too, if necessary), while the civil examinations for women and the women's official system provided the Kingdom with capable women to help in public affairs.

It seems a natural outcome that a cultural diversity of heterogeneous elements will show inconsistencies and contradictions in its institutions, such as the coexistence of monogamy and polygyny; equality for both sexes in the distri-

bution of land, but inequality in marriage; asking women not to learn of the affairs outside the household, but offering them civil examinations and bureaucratic opportunities.

The position of Taiping women can be examined in the Taiping institutions related to women. A Taiping marriage, which had to obtain official approval, was arranged by the official match-makers. Except for some of higher rank, people seldom had free choice. The marriage ceremony was held in a church at the expense of the common treasury. Polygyny, as well as monogamy, was a legal form of marriage. Women were considered rewards for men in the practice of polygyny. The characteristics mentioned above demonstrate that the Taipings tried to unify their marriage system under the authority of the state. The system neither provided freedom for women (except for some female officers of high rank who had free choice), nor regarded women as equal to men. The extremely limited materials indicate that Confucian principles of kinship relationship formed the structure of the Taiping family. All evidence available shows that the position and roles of women in a Taiping family were the same as those in a traditional family with only one exception, that as a family member, a woman had equal rights in the distribution of land. Generally speaking, the position of women in terms of marriage and family remained unimproved.

The establishment of women's quarters, which was a new development in Chinese history, provided women with an opportunity to demonstrate their talent and capability in both military and civilian work. In traditional China, both military affairs and heavy labour were considered men's work. The Taiping women's quarters proved that women could fulfill military duties and work as hard as men. The Kingdom offered military and civilian work, not only for men, but also for women. In this sense, the Taiping women obtained equality with men and a new channel by which to improve their position.

The Taiping's education system differed from the traditional system mainly because it did not neglect women's education. The Kingdom offered the same textbooks for both sexes. Women as well as men had to study the Taiping Bible and attend the same church. Women could also be teachers. These indicate that the Taiping women had more educational opportunities than the traditional women.

The Taiping women could not only participate in the civil examinations, but also hold official positions. In addition to receiving a degree, anyone who passed the examination was appointed to a certain official position. Perhaps because the lack of well-educated women who were capable of taking the examination, the Taiping Kingdom offered the examination only once and could not completely depend on



it for recruiting female officials. Without taking the civil examination, the relatives of the kings and the first sisters, who had joined the rebellion in Kwangsi, were also appointed as officials. The existence of women's civil examination and female officials indicate that the political position of women in T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo was greatly enhanced.

The Taiping authorities attempted to eliminate the evil customs of society--slavery, prostitution, foot-binding and infanticide etc.. Because the main victims of slavery and prostitution were women, the abolition of slavery and prohibition of prostitution, in a certain sense, meant the emancipation of women. Foot-binding was destructive to health and restricted movement. The major victims of infanticide were female babies. Both the prohibitions of foot-binding and infanticide were protective policies for women which helped them to improve their position.

After investigating Taiping institutions related to women, we find that the status of women was improved in many aspects. In the political sphere, they were allowed to take the civil examination and to hold official positions. As to the military aspect, there were female soldiers and officers. Economically, a woman, as a family member, had equal rights in the distribution of land. As for education, women were no longer neglected. The policies of eliminating certain evil customs indirectly enhanced women's position. The Taiping

institutions improved women's status, though whether this was their intention remains unknown.

The Taiping believed in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. All human beings were God's children, thus, all men were brothers, and all women, sisters. Perhaps it is from such a religious belief that the Taiping ideal of social equality evolved, for people who had such a belief were more likely to establish institutions which did not discriminate against women. However, it does not necessarily follow that they would offer equal opportunities for both sexes. The Hakka social customs were easily adapted to the ideal of social equality. As discussed before in Chapter VI, the Hakka women were relatively independent and harder working as compared to Chinese women of other areas. They were used to doing work normally done by men. In their daily life, it would seem that the Hakka women were not as strictly separated from men as elsewhere. The position of women in the Hakka communities suggests the Taiping view on women. In addition to these, the need for women's help was also an element which encouraged the Taipings to offer equal opportunities for women in certain fields. If women had not participated in the rebellion and performed a number of important duties, the rebellion might not have been possible.

In brief, the improvement of the position of the Taiping women depended on the implementation of the Taipings'

new ideas which were influenced by Christianity, Hakka customs and practical necessity. The unchanged aspects of Taiping women's position are mainly attributed to the traditional influence. If the Taiping rebels had succeeded in defeating the Manchu Dynasty and had carried through their new ideas, perhaps the emancipation of Chinese women would not have been delayed until the twentieth century.

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## TABLE OF TRANSLITERATION

An-ch'ing	安慶
Anhwei	安徽
Chang Chia-fu	張家福
Chang Chia-hsiang	張家祥
Chang Chüeh	張角
Chang Hsien-chung	張獻忠
Chang Ju-nan	張汝南
Chang Pin-yuan	張炳垣
Ch'ang-sha	長沙
Ch'ang-sheng-chün	常勝軍
Chang Wan-ju	張婉如
Chao Chin-lung	趙金龍
Ch'ao-nei nü-kuan	朝內女官
Ch'en A-kuei	陳阿貴
Chen-chiang	鎮江
Ch'en Hui-yen	陳徵言
Chen-ming chao-chi shu	真命詔旨書
Ch'en Tsung-yang	陳宗揚
Ch'en Yü-ch'eng	陳玉成
Ch'eng-hsiang	丞相
Ch'eng-huang	城隍
Cheng-tao	正道
Ch'i-ch'u	七出



- Ch'i-tao 妻道  
 Chia-ch'ing 嘉慶  
 Chia-ying-chou 嘉應州  
 Chiang-chün 將軍  
 Chiao-t'ang 橋塘  
 Ch'ien (ts'ieh) 妾  
 Chien-chün 監軍  
 Ch'ien Lung 乾隆  
 Chien-tien 檢點  
 Chih-hui 指揮  
 Chin 斤  
 Chin-ho 金和  
 Chin-hu ch'i-mo 金壺七墨  
 Ch'in Liang-yü 秦良玉  
 Chin-ling 金陵  
 Chin-ling kuei-chia chi-shih lüeh 金陵癸甲記事略  
 Chin-ling sheng-nan chi-lüeh 金陵省難記略  
 Chin-ling tsa-chi 金陵雜記  
 Chin-shih 進士  
 Chin-t'ien 金田  
 Chin Wu Ti 晉武帝  
 Ch'ing 清. 頃  
 Ch'ing Kao Tsung 清高宗  
 Ch'ing-yüan 慶遠  
 Ch'iu Erh-sou 邱二嫂

Ch'iu-i chao sheng-shu 舊遺詔聖書

Ch'iu-kuan 秋官

Chou 周

Chou-kuan 周官

Chou-li 周禮

Ch'ü Chen-tsu 區振祖

Chu-jen 舉人

Ch'üan-chou 全州

Chüan-shih liang-yen 勸世良言

Chün-chung nü-kuan 軍中女官

Ch'un-kuan 春官

Ch'un-kuan ch'eng-hsiang 春官丞相

Chün-shuai 軍帥

Chung 鍾

Chung Tai-yün 鍾岱云

Chung-t'uan t'uan-shuai 中團團帥

Chung Wang 忠王

Fang-hua 放花

Feng Yü-shan 馮雲山

Fu-po 伏波

Fu Shan-hsiang 傅善祥

Fu Wang 輔王

Fukien 福建

Han 漢

Han Kuang Wu 漢光武

- Han Ming Ti 漢明帝  
 Ho-shen 和 珅  
 Honan 河南  
 Hou 侯  
 Hsi-kiang 西 江  
 Hsi Wang 西 王  
 Hsia-kuan 夏 官  
 Hs'iang-chou 象 州  
 Hsiang-chün 湘 軍  
 Hsiang Jung 向 榮  
 Hsiang-shih 鄉 試  
 Hsiao Ch'ao-kuei 蕭 朝 貴  
 Hsiao San-niang 蕭 三 娘  
 Hsieh Chieh-ho 謝 介 鶴  
 Hsieh San 謝 三  
 Hsien-feng 咸 豐  
 Hsin-chou 潯 州  
 Hsin-chou fu-chih 潯 州 府 志  
 Hsin-i chao sheng-shu 新 遺 詔 聖 書  
 Hsin Mang 新 莽  
 Hsiu-shih 秀 士  
 Hsiu-tsai 秀 才  
 Hsueh-hai T'ang 學 海 堂  
 Hua-hsien 花 縣  
 Hua Mu-lan 花 木 蘭

Huai-chün 淮軍  
 Huang Ch'ao 黃巢  
 Huang-chin 黃巾  
 Huang ching ching-chih 皇清經解  
 Huang Chun-tsai 黃鈞宰  
 Huang Shang-ti 皇上帝  
 Huang Wen-chin 黃文金  
 Hui-shih 會試  
 Hunan 湖南  
 Hung Hsiu-ch'uan 洪秀全  
 Hung Hsüan-chiao 洪宣嬌  
 Hung Jen-kan 洪仁玕  
 Hung-men 洪門  
 Hupei 湖北  
 I-ping jih-chi 乙丙日記  
 I Wang 翼王  
 Ju-hsueh 儒學  
 Juan Yuan 阮元  
 Kan Wang 干王  
 K'ang-hsi 康熙  
 Kansu 甘肅  
 Kiangsi 江西  
 Kiangsu 江蘇  
 Ku Tsung 顧琮  
 Kuei-hsien 貴縣  
 Kuei-lin 桂林

Kuei-p'ing 貴平  
 Kwang-chou 廣州  
 Kwangsi 廣西  
 Kwangtung 廣東  
 Lai Shih 賴氏  
 Li-chi 禮記  
 Li Hsiu-ch'eng 李季成  
 Li Hung-chang 李鴻章  
 Li-shu-t'ieh 禮書帖  
 Li Tzu-ch'eng 李自成  
 Liang 兩  
 Liang A-chiu 梁阿九  
 Liang Fa 梁發  
 Liang Hung-yü 梁紅玉  
 Liang ssu-ma 兩司馬  
 Lieh nü ch'uan 列女傳  
 Lien-t'ang 蓮塘  
 Lin 林  
 Lin Shuang-wen 林爽文  
 Liu-chou 柳州  
 Liu Hsiang 劉向  
 Liu-meng 劉猛  
 Lu-li 六禮  
 Lü-shuai 旅帥  
 Lü-ying 綠營

Lung-feng ho-hui 龍鳳合揮

Mai-ch'ing liu-t'u 賣青留土

Meng Te-en 蒙得恩

Ming 明

Ming Hsüan Tsung 明宣宗

Mou 畝

Nan Wang 南王

Niang-niang 娘娘

Nu 奴

Nü chien-chün 女監軍

Nü chuang-yuan 女狀元

Nü chün-shuai 女軍帥

Nü hsiu-chin chih-hui 女繡錦指揮

Nü liang-ssu-ma 女兩司馬

Nü ts'u-chang 女卒長

Nü tsung-chih 女總制

Nü-tzu 女伺

Nü-tzu wu tsai pien shih te 女子無才便是德

Nü-ying hsun-ch'a 女營巡查

Pa-chi 八旗

Pa-kung 八公

Pai-lien chiao 白蓮教

Pai shang-ti-hui 拜上帝會

Pei Chi 北齊

Pei Wang 北王

Pei Wei 北魏

Peng-hua	鵬化
P'ing-nan	平南
Po-shih	博士
San-fan	三藩
San-ho hui	三合會
San-tien hui	三點會
San-ts'un chin-lien	三寸金蓮
San-tsung	三從
San-tzu-ching	三字經
San-yuan	三元
San-yuan li	三元里
Shang-ti-hui	上帝會
Shao-wu	邵武
Sheng	升
Sheng-yuan	生員
Shensi	陝西
Shih	石
Shih Feng-k'uei	石鳳魁
Shih-shuai	師帥
Shih Ta-k'ai	石達開
Shih-t'ou-chiao	石頭腳
Shih-wei	侍衛
Shu-yuan	書院
Sinkiang	新疆
Su San-niang	蘇三娘

Sui 隋

Sui Yang Ti 隋煬帝

Sung 宗

Sung Jen Tsung 宗仁宗

Szechwan 四川

Ta-ch'ing lü-li 大清律例

Ta-hsuan 大宣

Ta-shih 達士

T'ai-p'ing tao 太平道

T'ai-p'ing t'iao-kuei 太平條規

T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo 太平天國

T'ang 唐

T'ang Hsüan Tsung 唐玄宗

Tao-kuang 道光

Ti fou tao jen 滌浮道人

Ti-kuan 地官

T'ien-ch'ao t'ien-mou chih-tu 天朝田畝制度

T'ien-ching 天京

T'ien-ch'ing tao-li shu 天情道理書

T'ien-fu hsia-fan chao-shu 天父下凡詔書

T'ien-fu-shih 天父詩

T'ien-kuan 天官

T'ien-kuan ch'eng-hsiang 天官丞相

T'ien-li chiao 天理教

T'ien-ming chao-chih shu 天命詔旨書



T'ien-ti hui 天地會  
 T'ien-tiao shu 天條書  
 T'ientsin 天津  
 T'ien Wang 天王  
 Ts'ai-ts'un-chiang 蔡村江  
 Ts'ao yün tsung tu 漕運總督  
 Ts'e (ch'i) 妻  
 Tseng Ch'ai-yang 曾釗揚  
 Tseng Kuo-fan 曾國藩  
 Tseng Shui-yuan 曾水源  
 Ts'u-chang 卒長  
 Tsung-chih 總制  
 Tu-hsiu-feng 獨秀峰  
 T'ung-chih 同治  
 Tung-kuan 冬官  
 Tung-kuan fu-ch'eng-hsiang 冬官副丞相  
 Tung Wang 東王  
 Tzu-cheng hsin-pien 資政新篇  
 Tzu-ching 紫荊  
 Tzu-ching-shan 紫荊山  
 Wan o yin wei shou 萬惡淫為首  
 Wan-sui 萬歲  
 Wang 王  
 Wang Shih-to 汪士鐸  
 Wang T'ao 王韜

Wang Tzu-chen 王自珍

Wei Ch'ang-hui 韋昌輝

Wei Chün 韋俊

Wei nü-tzu yü hsiao-jen wei nai yang yeh 惟女子與小人  
為難養也

Wen-chang 文昌

Wen-yu yü-t'an 龔膺餘談

Wu-ch'ang 武昌

Wu-ch'ang chi-shih 武昌紀事

Wu-chang 伍長

Wu-chih 五指

Wu-han 武漢

Wu-hsuan 武宣

Wu-hu 蕪湖

Wu-ts'u 伍卒

Yang-chou 揚州

Yang Erh-ku 楊二姑

Yang Fu-ch'ing 楊輔清

Yang Hsiu-ch'ing 楊秀清

Yao 姚

Ying Wang 英王

Yu-chang ch'ao-i 右掌朝儀

Yu-chih ch'ien-tzu chao 御製千字詔

Yu-hsueh-shih 幼學詩

Yu Wang 幼王

Yuan-k'ao 院考

Yuan-tao ch'iu shih ko 原道救世歌

Yueh-shih 約士

Yung-an 永安